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Fifty-fifth session

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25th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 20 September 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: I first give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Monie Captan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia.

Mr. Captan (Liberia): I am honoured to participate in this historic session on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Charles Ghankay Taylor, President of the Republic of Liberia.

I am pleased to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. My delegation acknowledges the astute diplomatic skills and esteemed wisdom that you bring to this important assignment. We are therefore assured of a successful convocation, and assure you of the full cooperation of the Liberian delegation.

I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to the outgoing President, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia, my brother and colleague, for the very able manner in which he conducted the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

In the same vein, I commend our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his vision, far-sightedness and the efficient manner in which he continues to carry out his mandate.

This session has the challenge of determining how the international community will address the primary issues of peace and development. It has the task of assisting in preventing intra-State, inter-State and regional conflicts, as well as of ensuring that we pursue balanced and non-selective approaches to their solution. In addition, it must consider how to bring equity to the present international financial structure. Despite the much heralded dividends that globalization offers, developing countries are still beset by mounting debt burdens, unfair trade practices, declining official development assistance, poor health delivery systems and inadequate resource flows. An improved environment for global interaction, sensitive to the needs of developing countries, is a dire necessity that must not be ignored during our deliberations.

The purposes and principles of the Charter have proved to be of durable value over the years. Today, as in the past, Liberia reaffirms its commitment to this instrument. The machinery that has evolved continues to be an indispensable framework for better international relations. But Member States cannot continue to support the United Nations in words only, and must avoid resorting to the expediency of exploiting it in the pursuit of narrow national aims that consistently discredit others.

At the dawn of this millennium, the United Nations performance will be measured principally by its capability to sustain and protect the universal values of liberty, equity and solidarity, tolerance, non-violence, respect for nature and shared responsibility, as endorsed by the Millennium Summit a few weeks ago. Liberia intends to be a part of the process.

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as endorsed by the Millennium Summit a few weeks ago. Liberia intends to be a part of the process.

There are areas of the United Nations that need constant attention and improvement. Liberia and other Member States have spoken of the need to deal with some of the structural and institutional malaise that continues to undermine the Organization's effectiveness. As emphasized in my address to the Millennium Summit, we must, first, review the inequitable representation of the world's people reflected in the present structure of the Security Council; secondly, review the undemocratic processes of decision-making in the Security Council; and, thirdly, review the continuous violations, with apparent impunity, of the United Nations Charter by the big, the rich and the powerful.

Indeed, when the Organization was constructed, five nations were entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing the entire world. The prevailing circumstances justified this dispensation, and Liberia, a signatory to the Charter, reasoned that the arrangement was acceptable. Time has unfolded new realities that make the arrangement of old unrealistic, unjustifiable and certainly unacceptable.

There is a need to take into account existing political, economic and security realities. I need hardly say that one area of concern to Liberia is the use of the veto in the Security Council — a use that, on some occasions, has proved to be in conflict with the noble objectives of the Charter.

Liberia is interested in peace, justice, development and economic progress for its people, and will not restrain its voice on issues that are vital to all nations and on which it should speak with an equally authoritative voice.

Mindful that peace can translate into a sustained climate for development, Liberia has continued to work within the framework of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to make peace in our subregion a reality. In this regard, Liberia was privileged to assume the mandate given to President Charles Ghankay Taylor by his colleagues, heads of State of ECOWAS, in Abuja in May 2000.

In keeping with consultations held among the Chairman of ECOWAS, the Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the President of Nigeria, and the President of the Gambia, hosted by the President of Liberia, in Monrovia on 26 July 2000, a new leader and interlocutor of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) has been named by the RUF high command, through a letter to the Chairman of ECOWAS. Thus Corporal Foday Sankoh was removed from the peace process in Sierra Leone. Additionally, the new RUF leadership has indicated, in writing, its willingness to accept a ceasefire, to return to positions held at the signing of the Lomé Agreement on 7 July 1999, to accept the deployment of an ECOWAS contingent of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) into RUF positions and to proceed with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

Liberia, along with other ECOWAS member States, has also called upon the new RUF leadership to show good faith by returning all seized arms, ammunition and equipment to UNAMSIL. It has been reported that some armoured personnel carriers have been returned to UNAMSIL, but we must continue to insist on full restitution.

Liberia wishes to take this opportunity to again condemn the taking of United Nations peacekeepers by the RUF, an act that challenged and undermined our concerted efforts to ensure collective security. Likewise, the recent attacks on United Nations personnel in East Timor and Macenta, Guinea, are unacceptable and warrant the collective actions of Member States of the United Nations to prevent any future attacks against United Nations personnel. We must send a clear and unambiguous message to all groups that the people of the world intend to adequately protect those individuals commissioned to carry out specific assignments for and on behalf of the United Nations, whether in the area of peacekeeping or in the discharge of other humanitarian services.

The Government of Liberia has expressed its support for Security Council resolution 1306 (2000), which calls for an end to the smuggling of diamonds from Sierra Leone. As evidence of this, my Government has committed itself to undertaking several initiatives, including the enactment of a statute criminalizing the export of undocumented or uncertified diamonds; the enforcement of legislation requiring the Central Bank of Liberia to issue certificates of origin, in line with existing laws; and the development of a transparent process, with the assistance of experts from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

After the Liberian civil war our Government took several measures to consolidate peace and security in our subregion, especially since many disgruntled former combatants sought refuge in neighbouring countries. The Government of Liberia voluntarily destroyed, with the assistance of ECOWAS and the United Nations, more than 21,000 small arms and more than 3 million rounds of ammunition. The Government of Liberia also signed the protocol to the ECOWAS small arms Moratorium.

Despite these measures, and the current imposition of an unjust arms embargo against Liberia, armed insurgents from the neighbouring country of Guinea have attacked Liberia for the third time. The repeated violations of Liberia's territorial integrity by armed insurgents from the area of the Guinea-Sierra Leone borders have been reported to this Assembly and the Security Council, the OAU and ECOWAS. Though generally unacknowledged and not condemned, in April 1999 there was an incursion from Guinea, followed by another in August of the same year.

A third and most recent attack emanating from the Republic of Guinea is ongoing and has resulted in the loss of lives and property and the displacement of a large number of our people.

We are alarmed by the large quantities of new arms and ammunition being used by the insurgents coming from Guinea, and the implications for ongoing armed conflicts and potential hotbeds in our subregion.

The repatriation of some 32,000 refugees to Liberia by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been suspended as a result of the armed incursion. Indeed, Liberia is a stakeholder in the peace and security of the subregion, and especially in bringing the illegal arms trade in West Africa to an end.

The inviolability of the borders between Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone remains a crucial issue. We call, once more, for a monitoring presence of the United Nations at these borders to monitor all crossing points capable of vehicular traffic. We recognize the enormous cost of policing the entire length of the borders and suggest the utilization of an airborne multi-spectral service to detect any unusual movements of any type along the entire border. Intelligence gathered therefrom could prove useful to the three countries and the international community at large. The cost of this service is reasonable and could be underwritten by the international community.

The Government of Liberia wishes to bring to the attention of this Assembly the maltreatment of Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea, which was incited by a speech given by the President of Guinea, General Lansana Conté, on 9 September 2000, and confirmed by Human Rights Watch. The refugees have been arrested, beaten and some even raped.

These actions are in violation of international conventions and we appeal to the international community to call upon the Guinean authorities to respect and to protect all refugees living within their territory. The attack on Guinea, while condemnable, is no excuse for such inhumane treatment meted out against innocent refugees.

Liberia remains committed to the pursuit of peace and stability, both at home and in the subregion, and in so doing, will assiduously struggle for the socio-economic uplifting of its people and those of the subregion under the ECOWAS Treaty.

In my intervention last year, I renewed my Government's request for the Security Council to lift the arms embargo imposed on Liberia eight years ago in 1992. I advanced reasons in support of this request, principal among which was the constitutional duty to defend the territorial boundaries of Liberia and to protect all individuals therein, and especially in light of the repeated armed incursions into Liberia by dissidents from Guinea. Again, in early July 2000 there was another incursion into Liberia from the same country by dissidents with the declared objective of overthrowing the duly elected Government of President Charles Ghankay Taylor. As I speak, there is an ongoing war between Government forces and the dissidents.

Although our repeated requests for the lifting of the arms embargo have not received a favourable response from the Security Council, we again put this matter before that body for urgent consideration.

The present security situation within Liberia and the West African subregion compels us to seek removal of these restrictions, so that the Government of Liberia can acquire the means to protect its citizens and others within the territorial confines of the country, as well as to maintain a stable environment. On the other hand, the continued existence of an arms embargo against

Liberia in the midst of repeated armed aggression is a violation of our inherent right to self-defence under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. If the United Nations fails to grant Liberia the right to defend itself, then the United Nations is obligated to provide for the security and defence of Liberia.

The persistent attacks on Liberia, we believe, are precipitated and encouraged by the knowledge that dissident forces have of the existence of the United Nations arms embargo on Liberia, which leaves Liberia vulnerable to such callous and unwarranted attacks on its nation and people by dissidents outside of the country.

The Security Council arms embargo has not only undermined and compromised Liberia's capacity for self-defence, but it has further deprived our universities from obtaining needed laboratory chemicals, deprived our industries from acquiring essential explosives for mining and rock quarries. Hence, the arms embargo continues to have a disruptive impact on our educational system and our economy as well.

In this post-conflict environment, there is the urgent need to build confidence and enhance the capacity of government institutions, such as health, education and agriculture-related agencies and security apparatus, which are vital to meeting the basic needs of Liberians, including ex-combatants.

Pledges were made toward the achievement of this objective in Paris in December 1997. However, little aid has trickled in to further the reconstruction programmes of our Government.

Despite the assurances from the international community that the road to international assistance was a successful disarmament process followed by the holding of free and fair elections, the international donor community has continued to pursue a policy of punitive disengagement.

Pursuant to this policy, essentially, all known avenues for obtaining assistance are laden with impractical conditionalities, which are difficult to meet even by countries that have not experienced civil war. We wish to note that this exclusionary attitude approximates the imposition of economic sanctions on Liberia and its people.

However, whatever justification we may rationalize, there is a population of Liberia that has suffered the scourge of seven years of civil war: vulnerable children, women and the elderly, who deserve humane assistance irrespective of any political imperatives; people who care less for the politics of the machination of power brokers who arrogate unto themselves the right to determine what is acceptable behaviour in the international political system. I might add that Liberians are not automatons.

As a sovereign people, we claim the incontestable right to exercise the leading role in determining our destiny, especially the right of ownership of our development programmes. We are an integral part of the human family, pulsating with needs and aspirations that are good and honourable. We too desire to reap the benefits of the people-centred development underlined in the Millennium Declaration.

At this precarious period of our national life, Liberians have shown uncommon resilience and are relentlessly striving to rebuild their lives. What we seek from the international community is its empathy and human understanding in providing the requisite assistance that will enable Liberians to enjoy the basic human rights of food, security and peace. Importantly, we wish similar benefits for our neighbours and others beyond the West African subregion.

Following the successful celebration of the Millennium Summit, which reinforced our collective determination for the improvement of the management of the United Nations in the twenty-first century, it would seem morally incongruent that the 23 million people of Taiwan are being denied the right to participate in a United Nations.

General Assembly resolution 2758 (XXVI) denies the Taiwanese people the right to participate in United Nations activities and contravenes the United Nations Charter's principle of universality. How can such injustice suffice in this era of increased global interaction, economic interdependence, political transformation, democratization and rapprochement?

With the undeniable record of the Republic of China, its experience in democracy as proven by the recent election of President Chen Shui-bian, its respect for human rights, its economic power resulting from its acceptance of the market economy; the energy, imagination and courage of its people; technological achievements and humanitarian attributes all over the world, who would query its overarching relevance?

Liberia fervently reiterates its call for the inclusion of the Republic of China in this world Organization. We believe that the Republic of China can make important contributions that would serve the best interests of the United Nations community.

The world has witnessed a significant achievement in science and technology, leading to rapid industrialization and the improvement of the standard of living of humankind. Although the gains in science and technology have led to the development of new medicines and other scientific knowledge, it has equally posed a threat to the environment and human survival. Rapid industrialization and scientific discoveries are dangerously impacting the environment. Unless we modify our activities, the sweet stories of scientific achievement will sadly lead to tragedy and doom. In this new millennium we cannot ignore the potency of threats posed by environmental degradation to our survival. Saving the planet is a precursor to the continued existence of its 6 billion inhabitants.

This is why my delegation supports the efforts of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and endorses the Commission's recommendation to convene a General Assembly summit-level review, preferably in a developing country in 2002, to reassess the decision reached on Agenda 21 at the Rio Conference in 1992.

Among the many impediments to social and economic development in Africa are poverty, poor health delivery systems, intra-regional wars and civil conflicts. It is a known fact that there is a correlation between war, civil conflict and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The HIV/AIDS pandemic targets and destroys our human resource, which is the basis for our socio-economic development. United Nations records show that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS increases in countries affected by war and civil conflicts, owing to population movements. Therefore, we should not ignore the fact that post-conflict countries need special attention to fight the disease.

Throughout Africa, HIV/AIDS accounts for the increase in the death rate among young people and adults between ages 10 and 24, and 25 and 45 respectively.

We appeal to the relevant United Nations agencies and other partners in the HIV/AIDS programmes to help Liberia obtain the $6.5 million needed to prevent and control the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Meanwhile, in reference to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee working group established by the Security Council in January this year to examine the relationship between war and civil strife and the spread of HIV/AIDS, I would like to state my delegation's endorsement of the targets set for reductions in new infections, and applaud the measures taken thus far to provide care, support and access to information and medication for HIV/AIDS victims. Hence, my delegation commends the United Nations for its assistance to countries significantly affected by this dreadful epidemic.

Apart from HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and polio contribute immensely to the obliteration of socio-economic gains in countries where they are widespread. Cognizant of the impediments that these infectious diseases pose to our socio-economic development, Nigeria has offered to host an African Summit on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases in the year 2001. Meanwhile, we commend President Olusegun Obasanjo for hosting the African Summit on "Roll Back Malaria" in April this year.

We in Liberia have not relented in our efforts to reduce, if not eliminate, these health scourges that continue to threaten our social and economic development. Hence, the Liberian Government in cooperation with the World Health Organization has, as a result of a vigorous campaign, successfully contained polio, which killed and immobilized thousands of our citizens in past years. The polio vaccination campaign targeted 900,000 people, and the number of people vaccinated was 911,423.

I am pleased to report that, if I am allowed to borrow and paraphrase the main slogan from this successful campaign: we are determined to "Kick polio out of Liberia".

Liberia continues to be saddled by the debt burden. This debt overhang, which remains a major contributor to the gap between the rich and poor nations, was acquired out of loans given in the pursuit of influence in the cold war, which, as I stated in my address to the Millennium Summit, was not in the interest of the borrower. As a result of the debt burden, our children are deprived of food, education, health care, and jobs for their parents.

While we commend countries that have taken steps to relieve poorer countries of their debt burden, I emphasize that unless all rich creditor nations adopt measures to erase this burden, it will continue to be oppressive, and an impediment to sustainable development for poor countries.

Liberia rejects the proclaimed efficacy of the highly indebted poor countries initiative, and calls upon the G7/G8 countries to consider a comprehensive debt waiver programme for all highly indebted poor countries.

In January this year, the meeting on poverty reduction and growth held in Libreville, Gabon, highlighted the situation in post-conflict countries that the Copenhagen Conference failed to address.

In this regard, Liberia has proposed the holding of a regional summit of post-conflict African States to develop a realistic approach to debt eradication, and calls on the international community to support this important venture.

As I conclude, I cannot help but wonder what this new Millennium has in store for the people of the world. Nationalism remains an unchallenged reality today, despite the wave of globalization engulfing our world. Also, the politics of power and "might makes right" still pervade in inter-State relations, especially among the powerful. Will the powerful break down the zeal of nationalism under the cover of their demand for good governance, democracy, transparency and human rights?

We have indeed seen with what double standards and ulterior motives these demands have been made. Or, will the lofty tenets of the Charter be upheld in equally recognizing and respecting the right of self-determination of the small and the big, the poor and the affluent, in a world rich in cultural diversity deserving of coexistence in peace and universal harmony? Will this millennium see the end of cultural hegemony and arrogance, primitive sentiments undeserving of this new age of enlightenment and technology?

Only the test of consistency between our moral value system and our actions will stand witness to posterity.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Francophonie of the Central African Republic, His Excellency Mr. Marcel Metefara.

Mr. Metefara (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): Our stubborn quest for a world of peace, progress, solidarity and of concord recently prompted the Heads of State and of Government from the world over to commit themselves at the Millennium Summit to joint reflection about the ways of making a reality of this aspiration in the twenty-first century.

The conclusions they arrived at, conclusions that can be summarized as the need for us to usher in a new era in international relations, without a doubt mark the framework for the future work of our Organization.

It is thus a positive circumstance that our work is unfolding against this backdrop so that during our deliberations we might strive to act in accordance with the guidelines set for us by our Heads of State.

But before my delegation attempts its own assessment of the state of the world as we look at the fresh challenges facing us in the twenty-first century, I should like, on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Ange-Félix Patassé, President of our Republic and Head of State, who wishes us every success in our work, to address to you, Mr. President, as well as to the other members of the Bureau, our heartfelt congratulations on your election to the presidency of this session.

Your superb mastery of international affairs in the context of which your country, Finland, holds a very special place, bodes well indeed for the success of this session and, in this connection, you can count on the cooperation of the delegation of the Central African Republic.

The competence with which your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia, guided the work at the fifty-fourth session, has earned the full appreciation of my delegation.

I should like as well to express again to the Secretary-General the full support of the Government of the Central African Republic for all he is constantly doing at the helm of our Organization to provide solid underpinnings for peace and development in a world which has become complex indeed. The relevance of the proposals that he put forward in his introductory report at the Millennium Summit reflect his deep commitment to fully serving the cause of the Organization, and we are deeply grateful.

Furthermore, the Central African Republic, which has always encouraged our Organization to stride forward towards universality, welcomes the admission

of Tuvalu as the 189th Member State. I am delighted to congratulate this young republic on behalf of the delegation of the Central African Republic.

A world of peace, of progress, of solidarity and of concord, such was the philosophy of the founding fathers of the United Nations.

How can one explain then that 55 years later we should be so far from attaining that goal?

Peace, when it is not assured, gives way to war. Factors such as penury, destitution, poverty, AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis — compounded by intolerance, injustice, indifference and social inequalities — these make up the threats to the balance of peace.

Progress is a reality for only a quarter of humankind, while three quarters still are not enjoying decent living conditions.

Solidarity still is something selectively applied in a world that is nonetheless interdependent.

All this cannot foster fellowship within this constantly changing world.

That is the state of the world as we enter the twenty-first century.

The Secretary-General's report entitled "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century" has the merit of having pointed out all these distortions that do not help to ensure the smooth unfolding of international relations.

But even though the United Nations, 55 years after having come into being, has not fulfilled the hopes to which its inception gave rise, the fact nonetheless remains that it does exist. And the fact that it still does exist is something which first and foremost is due to the determination of States, which do in fact feel the need for this Organization. We must therefore stimulate renewed interest in the United Nations; that is what is at stake at this session.

The United Nations must regain its authority in order to contribute to regulating the course of events in the world in the twenty-first century. On the basis of real solidarity among States, we must conceive of a new kind of cooperation that would make it possible for us collectively to organize a defence of peace, the promotion of development and of progress, as well as the fostering of human rights and of democracy everywhere around the world.

The fact is that as you look around the world these days, you find that peace is jeopardized in many different countries, and especially on the African continent.

What is more, all this is happening as though the conventional conflict-settlement machinery were no longer suited to coping with crisis situations. Still, the resources afforded by the United Nations, as well as by regional organizations, have made it possible for a new attitude in the face of conflict to emerge, one which first and foremost involves regional solidarity.

It is in this context that my country today still plays host to a United Nations office, the United Nations Peace-Building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), responsible for striving to consolidate peace. Indeed the tragic events for which the Central African Republic became the staging ground in 1996 and 1997 prompted African countries first to intervene in the context of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB), before bringing the United Nations into the picture. The United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) made a genuine contribution by its very presence and by what it did in restoring peace and in promoting national reconciliation, thanks to the support provided in organizing both legislative and presidential elections.

I would like here again to express the appreciation of the Government of the Central African Republic to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to the members of the Security Council and especially to the countries that so generously contributed to supporting that mission of peace by providing the wherewithal for MINURCA.

The experience gained in the Central African Republic can be made available as an asset to the United Nations, reflecting a success in keeping the peace and consolidating it. My delegation, which supports the Brahimi report, hopes that the recommendations it embodies will be fully implemented so that we really see take root a new doctrine for United Nations operations of peacekeeping.

In the same vein, my delegation hopes that the United Nations provides the same resources to

promoting a lasting settlement in the situations in Sierra Leone, in Angola, in Burundi, between Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which shares a rather long border with my own country, my delegation calls for cooperation from the international community in the context of the United Nations, so that a solution may be found to this conflict, the consequences of which have already taken a heavy toll, both for the Congolese people, with which we are bound by fraternal ties, as well as for the neighbouring States such as the Central African Republic, which is currently hosting tens of thousands of refugees that have fled the effects of the war. My delegation takes advantage of this opportunity to call upon the competent international authorities, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in particular, to devote special attention to the Central African Republic in this instance.

Moreover, my delegation firmly supports the ongoing process seeking to bring about a settlement to the question of the Middle East. We do not doubt that the determination of the parties involved will make it possible to lift the last remaining obstacles so that a fair, negotiated and lasting solution in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) may be found.

The United Nations subsequently should regain its authority in order to enable it to contribute by letting multilateralism work to promote development throughout the world. The fact is that without denying what has been done internationally to fight poverty and while acknowledging that developing countries should shoulder primary responsibility for ensuring the necessary preconditions for their development, my delegation hopes that the community of States will come to grips with the question of poverty and will apply a fresh way of thinking to it in this twenty-first century.

All the indicators of poverty are there for us to see, and you can find them everywhere in Africa: weak primary educational systems, a lack of sanitary infrastructure, a lack of drinking water, of the proper conditions for hygiene, to name but a few. The African continent is part of that 1 billion inhabitants of our planet living on less than one dollar a day, while two-thirds of the population of the planet hold three-quarters of the world's income.

Poverty is extreme in Africa; we must do our utmost to come up with new ways to reduce it in the twenty-first century.

The Central African Republic, which at the beginning of this year took part in the Libreville summit on growth and poverty reduction in Africa, abides by the new strategic framework to combat poverty proposed by the Bretton Woods institutions. My country therefore calls for an increase in the resources allocated to such agencies as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to support the Central African Republic's strategy to combat poverty.

Of course, eradicating poverty will be necessary in order to make it possible for developing countries to take part in the work of development. That is particularly true with regard to the countries of Africa. But it will also be necessary to put developing countries in a position where they can really rise to the development challenge. In this connection, the issue of the debt burden comes to mind, for it continues to substantially handicap all development efforts.

How, then, can we ensure that globalization stimulates development in Africa instead of leading to marginalization? Inasmuch as the new technologies that are being introduced contribute to the overall progress of mankind, Africa must expect to benefit, and we once again call for the rules governing the work of the World Trade Organization to take Africa's interests into account.

In his introductory report to the Millennium Summit, the Secretary-General reminded us that all activity is people-oriented. Nothing is more true. My delegation hopes that the United Nations will regain its authority so that it can contribute to ensuring the necessary conditions for the promotion of rights and democracy throughout the world. Guaranteeing and protecting human rights contributes to national consensus and strengthening democracy in a country.

We have understood that so well in the Central African Republic that we have created a government body called the High Commission for Human Rights, whose mission is not only to monitor respect for human

rights, but also to implement the various international legal instruments signed by the Central African Republic aimed at promoting human rights. That implementation requires resources in order to bring about the most widespread dissemination possible of human rights at the national level. As human rights are indivisible, it is important to establish cooperation between States to promote human rights throughout the world. My delegation hopes that in the course of the twenty-first century the United Nations will become increasingly involved in international efforts to establish a worldwide culture of human rights. It must be reformed and renewed in order to be able to take on that role.

Renewal means adaptation to the realities of the world today. The Organization's procedures, methods and approaches to every issue within its competence will have to be streamlined. However, let us not forget that protecting international peace and security is the primary task entrusted to the United Nations. That role is primarily the responsibility of the Security Council.

My delegation would like to see the Security Council reformed in order to better discharge that responsibility. The world has changed profoundly, and the composition of the Security Council should reflect that. Even though the veto power is not as abused today as it was during the cold war, we should restructure the Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories to take into account the new international reality. That is the opinion of the delegation of the Central African Republic.

In that way we can contribute to setting relations between nations on a different course. That requires a real and willing commitment by States. This year's adoption of the Constitutive Act of the African Union as an expression of Africa's willingness to join the United Nations in meeting all the challenges is a manifestation of that commitment. My country will do everything in its power to encourage this new movement towards integration.

The century that witnessed the birth of the United Nations has ended. A new century is beginning, one in which there is still a United Nations — something that is cause for satisfaction to mankind. But what shall we make of the United Nations in the twenty-first century? That is indeed the fundamental question raised by the Secretary-General in his report to the Millennium Summit.

Should we continue to keep the United Nations locked in the vice of contradictions that exists between Member States? Should we continue to look on helplessly as its authority is flouted in peacekeeping operations? Should we continue to accept the Organization's being left behind as the world moves forward? The answer, in the opinion of the delegation of the Central African Republic, is a resounding "No".

Let us therefore return to the dream of the founding fathers and make sure that in the new century the United Nations has the necessary means to bring about peace, solidarity and harmony throughout the world. Such a world is possible if we want it. That is the world our Heads of State spoke of in their message to us at the Millennium Summit.

The President: I should like to inform the Assembly that the representative of the Federated States of Micronesia has requested to participate in the general debate. Inasmuch as the list of speakers was closed on Thursday, 14 September 2000, may I ask the Assembly whether there is any objection to the inclusion of that delegation in the list of speakers?

I see none. The Federated States of Micronesia is therefore included in the list.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Fernando Messmer Trigo, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bolivia.

Mr. Messmer Trigo (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Government of Bolivia has given me the task of conveying its most sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, which is a recognition of your personal merits and a tribute to your country. At the same time, I thank Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab for his work during the fifty-fourth session and for his dedication during the preparations for the Millennium Summit and the Millennium Assembly.

Special thanks must also go to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his report preparatory to the Millennium Summit, the content of which has given us an opportunity to reflect upon and address specific issues with which the United Nations has been concerned in its 55 years of existence.

We also welcome the recent admission of Tuvalu as a new, fully fledged Member of our Organization.

The recent Millennium Summit reaffirmed the recognition by the international community of the importance and significance of, and the prospects for, the United Nations Organization. It also highlighted the urgency of adapting it to, and equipping it for, the new realities in which we live, which are certainly quite different from the situation and circumstances that prevailed when our Organization came into being.

The concerns of peoples and Governments today are also different. Poverty, underdevelopment and exacerbated inequalities contribute to new divisions, which threaten to lead to violence. These realities must be corrected, because they have the potential of spawning conflicts that, if allowed to persist, could seriously jeopardize the world's economic and political stability, and, it goes without saying, international peace and security.

Our Organization needs to be strengthened if it is successfully to channel the expectations and opportunities of globalization while controlling, and indeed preventing, the dangers implicit in it, especially for the more vulnerable economies, which are now threatened by new forms of exclusion.

The United Nations must be renewed so that it can continue to be the effective instrument for dialogue that is required to build a world in which greater security and solidarity prevail.

We must consequently redefine the Organization's priorities in such a way as to make it conducive to clear-sighted and effective action. This will require substantial reform of the system's economic and financial bodies, modernization of the General Assembly's methods of work, and the adaptation of the Security Council to these new realities. Other, equally important tasks include ensuring that the necessary resources are available to the Organization; obtaining financing for development and peacekeeping operations; and adjusting the scale of assessments in accordance with the basic principle of a country's capacity to pay.

A few short days ago, at the Millennium Summit, the President of Bolivia, Hugo Bánzer Suárez, referred to the close relationship between freedom and poverty, and between poverty and violence. He called for the fight against poverty to be waged in accordance with the principle of shared responsibility and with a genuine commitment to democracy, in order to mitigate present inequalities, which are threatening to intensify.

It is unfair, in an open economy, for markets to be closed and for discriminatory measures to be applied with protectionist intent. It is also vital to favour countries with small-scale economies through greater capital inflows and debt relief programmes.

Science and technology must become the heritage of humankind. Scientific and technological knowledge must not widen already existing gaps and divisions.

At the historic meeting of South American Presidents, held recently in Brasilia, the heads of State of the region stressed the importance of access to the new information and knowledge age, which will open the way for our countries to strengthen a system of continuing education that ensures education at all levels for the all sectors of society and permits unrestricted access to knowledge and information.

Democracy, which essentially seeks to organize life in society, is a vital concept that changes and is updated in tune with the changing pace of societies themselves, without in any way detracting from its fundamental values. Convinced as we are that democracy must go beyond electoral formalities and that sovereignty is vested in the people and expressed through its representatives, we in Bolivia have declared the principle of political dialogue and consultation to be the basis of a pluralistic and participatory democratic system.

In that context, the practice of holding a national dialogue was instituted during the administration of President Bánzer. That mechanism is aimed at establishing a new relationship of joint efforts and shared responsibility between Government institutions, the political system and organizations throughout society. The creation of key State policies grew out of the first such national dialogue, held in 1997.

This year, a national dialogue has been initiated once again to lend fresh impetus to institutional reforms and to put together a national anti-poverty programme. A new plan, involving over 3,000 inhabitants in townships across Bolivia, is being elaborated whose objective is to assign rights and responsibilities that, within the framework of a market economy, will make it possible for us to combat the poverty that still afflicts vast sectors of our population, despite nearly 20 years of life under democracy.

Shortly after taking office, in August 1997, President Bánzer Suárez vowed that during his

mandate Bolivia would be removed from the drug-trafficking loop once and for all, through the implementation of an integrated policy that encompasses alternative development, the eradication of illegal coca crops, confiscation, prevention and rehabilitation.

Despite doubts as to the feasibility of this plan, we can now affirm that we will be fulfilling our commitments ahead of time. In 1997, there were approximately 38,000 hectares of illegal coca cultivation in Bolivia. Today, more than 80 per cent of such illegal crops have been eradicated.

Our concern now is essentially whether we can sustain these achievements. Conditions must be created which in future will obviate a return to coca-leaf production as a result of the lack of jobs and income. Our major efforts now are aimed at alternative development, to see to it that illegal coca income is replaced by legal earnings from other productive activities. If we do not achieve concrete results, we run the risk of seeing those persons who cannot hope to find any other means of subsistence fall once again prey to the temptation of cultivating coca. That would constitute a surrender to the drug dealers and signify a defeat not only for Bolivia but for the world community.

What Bolivia needs, then, is support in two basic areas: first, in the area of investment, to promote our economic growth in the sectors that generate the most job opportunities; and secondly, in the opening of secure markets for our exports.

At previous sessions of the Assembly, Bolivia has aired the historical, political and economic arguments on which it bases its absolute need to regain the maritime status that gave rise to its existence as an independent country. To that end, Bolivia has been encouraging direct dialogue with the Republic of Chile.

As a consequence of prior contacts, the Foreign Ministers of Bolivia and Chile met in Portugal in February this year, where an agreement was reached to prepare a working programme, to be formalized in the subsequent stages of dialogue, that will incorporate, without exclusion of any kind, the essential points of a bilateral relationship and seek to surmount the differences that have impeded full integration between Bolivia and Chile, the main obstacle to which has certainly been Bolivia's unresolved maritime demand. In a significant advance, on the occasion of the recent meeting of Presidents of South America, the Presidents of Bolivia and Chile, Hugo Bánzer and Ricardo Lagos, reiterated the willingness of their Governments to enter into dialogue on all topics relating to bilateral relations, without exception, in order to create a climate of mutual trust enabling the establishment of closer ties based on the structure and positions maintained by the two countries.

The world community, the Americas in particular, is following with great expectation the course of this diplomatic process and the progress achieved therein. The proposal to hold a dialogue on all topics without exception is a challenge to the creativity of those involved and puts to the test our political will to correct once and for all an unjust situation that has prevailed since 1879. Furthermore, Latin America's capacity to settle its own disputes in a fair, peaceful and negotiated way will be strengthened and progress thus made on the road to regional integration.

In that context, we propose the implementation of a programme to promote the integrated development of western Bolivia and northern Chile. We are also confident that Peru will participate in this programme in order to mobilize the resources and capabilities of the three countries of the region. In this way, a contribution will be made to linking the Atlantic and Pacific basins. The persistence of Bolivia's landlocked status at the heart of the continent is, without doubt, an obstacle to the creation of a major opportunity for thoroughgoing understanding and dialogue in the South American region and minimizes the effectiveness of work to promote integration being carried out in the area.

This occasion provides a fitting opportunity for us to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his interest in relations between Bolivia and Chile, which has been brought to the attention of the authorities of both countries. The Secretary-General has expressed his satisfaction with respect to the conversations held, according to the terms laid down by the parties, at the levels of heads of State, Foreign Ministers and other authorities of Bolivia and Chile.

My country pledges to make every effort to translate the desire recently expressed by the Presidents of Bolivia and Chile into action that will enable us, Bolivians and Chileans alike, to advance towards the resolution of our differences, with a view to the future and in a spirit of brotherhood.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Win Aung, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar.

Mr. Aung (Myanmar): At the outset, I would like to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to the presidency of this historic Millennium Assembly. We firmly believe that, under your able stewardship, the first session of the General Assembly in the new century will be a resounding success. This session provides us with an opportune moment to take stock of the track record of the Organization, its achievements and the areas where it needs to be strengthened so that it will be equal to the challenges of the new century.

I also wish to express our gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia, for the leadership he provided us in our preparations for this Millennium Assembly and for his tireless efforts and the dedication, skill and intelligent management with which he led the last session of the General Assembly of the twentieth century to a successful conclusion.

My delegation is most delighted to see in our midst Tuvalu as a new Member of this world Organization. With the admission of Tuvalu as the 189th Member of this Organization, our objective of universal membership is closer to reality. On behalf of the delegation of the Union of Myanmar, I would like to extend our warmest congratulations to the delegation of Tuvalu.

After the Second World War, under the Charter of the United Nations, we established the present system of collective security. Since then, we have witnessed substantial changes in the geopolitical map of the world, leading to new realities in international relations. There is a strong consensus that our Organization must be reformed and adapted to the new realities in order to enable it to effectively respond to the new challenges. This consensus has resulted in various measures and proposals to reform the Organization, including a process to make the Security Council more effective, democratic, transparent and accountable.

When this process started in 1993, we had hoped that we would have completed the reform of the Council by the beginning of the new millennium. After seven years of discussion on the reform of the Council, however, reality has revealed that the issue we took on was so complex that it could not be resolved quickly. While there has been convergence of ideas on some areas, in others we have come to an impasse. This does not mean that we should give up. On the contrary, we should explore new possible avenues to enhance the momentum we have gained. We must make use of this historic opportunity to give added impetus to reforming the Council so that it meets the needs of our time.

We believe that, at this stage of deliberations, we should identify areas of possible agreement and build on them. For instance, it appears to be generally agreed that the Council should be expanded in both categories of permanent and non-permanent membership. Similarly, a majority of countries tends to agree that the new members should come from among the developed and developing countries alike. While we continue our discussion on other aspects of the issue, it would be conducive to the reform process if we could establish general agreement on such possible areas where our views converge. I trust that the future discussions among us will give serious thought to these possibilities. We must redouble the efforts to reform our Organization so that it can truly serve us in our endeavour to build a better world.

As we enter the new millennium, we find to our dismay and alarm that some major international issues persist in defying our collective creativity and attempts to solve them. We must not let these setbacks cast a shadow over the credibility and effectiveness of this Organization. We consider it our primary duty to focus our attention on those questions dealing with development as well as those dealing with peace and security.

Mr. Fall (Guinea), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Despite the efforts of the international community, peace throughout the Middle East remains elusive. We hope that the important progress made so far will pave the way for achieving a just and lasting peace in the region. We would like to see an enduring peace in the Middle East, one which would guarantee the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the right of Israel to exist within secure and recognized borders.

There are many other questions that merit our attention. One such question I wish to bring to the attention of the Assembly is that of Cyprus. This question has been on the Assembly's agenda for the last 26 years. We are heartened to note that the United Nations is now engaged in another effort to solve the

problem. Myanmar has consistently supported the negotiations between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General, and we would like to take this opportunity to pledge our continued full support for the task.

Let me touch upon an important question that is of serious concern to the international community and on which we in Myanmar place special emphasis. I am referring to the problem of narcotic drugs. Nationally speaking, this is a problem that we inherited from the colonial administration. The poppy plant, from which opium is harvested, is not native to Myanmar. It was introduced into our country by the colonial administration, which relied on licensed opium dens as a source of revenue. Since then, this evil scourge has bedevilled the country. Successive Governments have been relentless in their efforts to eradicate the problem of narcotic drugs.

Thus, the eradication of poppy cultivation remains one of the top priorities for Myanmar. Notwithstanding the harsh and undue criticism levelled against Myanmar for a problem with wide international dimensions, our sustained efforts to combat the problem of narcotic drugs have resulted in a noticeable drop in opium cultivation and production. This fact is acknowledged by the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB). Here, it bears reiteration that narcotic drugs are a global problem, to be solved in a concerted manner and through global efforts. The problem must be tackled in a holistic manner, both from the production side and the demand reduction side. National efforts must be supported by international assistance and cooperation. Myanmar has been trying to combat this global problem mainly with its own resources. Except for the assistance provided by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), no substantial assistance has been provided to Myanmar in its current efforts to combat this global menace. This is tantamount to making a travesty of the much-avowed principle of shared responsibility.

Despite our efforts, Myanmar has been a target of unfair criticism and censure. An objective assessment will identify which countries are making real efforts to effectively tackle this global problem and which countries are paying mere lip service. The fact of the matter is that the scourge of narcotic drugs is not the sole responsibility of any one country. No country acting on its own can successfully overcome this menace. To tackle this global problem, we must join hands and cooperate with each other. Myanmar stands ready to do so.

The principles enshrined in the Charter have served the world community well for more than five decades. Sovereignty, sovereign equality, respect for territorial integrity and non-intervention in internal affairs are cardinal principles that remain vital for the peace and security of all nations. These are irreplaceable bedrock principles underpinning the current international system. These are the principles that have enabled the international community to successfully deter world conflagrations. Therefore, we are greatly dismayed by the recent tendency in some quarters to cast doubt on the continued soundness of these basic principles.

There are some who are bent on compromising these cardinal principles of international relations, voicing support for interference in countries' internal affairs on various grounds. This is indeed a dangerous trend, with dangerous implications for the peace and stability of our international system. At a time when the powerful increasingly make use of various international forums to fulfil their hidden political agendas, a very valid question must be posed: who determines the existence of a situation that warrants interference in internal affairs? The justification of interference in internal affairs under certain conditions is a concept easily vulnerable to abuse by the powerful for their narrow national interests. Interference, even for such a worthy cause as humanitarian assistance, can undermine the principles of neutrality and impartiality, thus endangering the entire system of humanitarian assistance. A well-intentioned mistake can unravel the fabric of the present international system, which has stood us in good stead.

No nation is entirely free from problems or difficulties. While some are more successful in solving their problems, others are less successful. There are some situations where the assistance of the international community is necessary to resolve these issues and difficulties; in other situations, national measures would best suit the situation. In trying to resolve these problems, a proper understanding and a correct perspective on the issue, both historical and current, are necessary. A solution obtained without such understanding and perspective is tantamount to treating the symptoms rather than the disease.

A careful look at countries with ongoing conflicts demonstrates that some issues are not susceptible to an easy and quick solution. They are deeply rooted in intra-State tensions and mistrust that have been lingering for hundreds of years. There are instances when seemingly successful solutions causing fleeting euphoria have turned out to be pyrrhic victories. This is principally because the root causes were never thoroughly understood and addressed.

Furthermore, appropriate and pragmatic national attempts at finding lasting solutions should be encouraged and supported. There are many cases where the role of the international community is indispensable. There are also many other cases where its proper role should be limited to assisting the State concerned in its efforts, complementing these efforts only where necessary.

The situation in Myanmar has been the subject of unfair scrutiny and political pressure by a number of powerful countries for quite some time. Therefore, I find it appropriate to take this opportunity to apprise the Members of the Organization of the situation in my country. The Government of Myanmar is in the process of establishing a democratic society. In this endeavour, it has chosen the path that is most suitable to the country, its people and its historical peculiarities. Contemporary history has shown that the transition to democracy from a totally different and centralized political and economic system is not always smooth. It requires ingenuity, patience and understanding to make the process peaceful.

Here I wish to underscore that the present Myanmar Government is making all-out efforts to solve the most fundamental problem of the country: the consolidation of national unity. Without satisfactorily resolving this basic question, the objectives of democracy, peace, prosperity and stability will not be realized. National unity will not be consolidated if we cannot address issues such as the eradication of poverty, equitable distribution of national wealth and the maintenance of peace and security.

The people of Myanmar share the view that these issues must be adequately addressed first and foremost in order to achieve the emergence of a developed, peaceful and prosperous State.

It is at this important and delicate juncture that all sorts of superficial and unsubstantiated charges are being made against us, placing many obstacles along our chosen path to democracy. This line of approach will only perpetuate the existing programmes in the country. It will give rise to unnecessary delays in our current democratization process. Here I wish to stress that it was a situation of chaos and anarchy that had threatened the country's survival as a State and that led the Tatmadaw, the armed forces, to assume State power. Although the present Government is a military government, the country is not governed by martial law. The entire body of legislation remains in place and the country is governed according to these legal provisions. The country also retains an independent judicial system.

Despite all obstacles placed in our path to development and against all odds, we have made considerable achievements, both economically and politically. On the political front, because of the Government's endeavour to build national unity, 17 armed groups have returned to the legal fold. We have been able to establish unprecedented peace and tranquillity. We have also made considerable strides in the country's economy. The country's gross domestic product continues to grow year after year. The economy registered 10.9 per cent growth last year. This growth pattern is expected to continue this year. The effective control of inflation also resulted in an appreciable increase in the living standard of the people of Myanmar. The people of the country are fully conscious of all these remarkable achievements. They are fully aware that they themselves are the direct beneficiaries of these positive results. The Government is determined to redouble its efforts to bring about peace and stability and a better standard of life for the people of Myanmar.

The peace and stability that we have today do not come easily. It is only in recent years that peace and stability returned to virtually all corners of the country. What we are doing is laying down a firm foundation necessary to build a modern, prosperous and peaceful nation. Far from recognizing the unprecedented achievements made by the Government, some Western countries have imposed on us political pressure and unilateral sanctions. International financial institutions are being used to deny us our rightful loans and assistance. These are hampering all our sincere and vigorous efforts to address the pressing problems of the nation and to uplift the country to a prosperous stage. However, we will continue on our chosen path of building a democratic society best suited to our

traditions, thus fulfilling the aspirations of our people. We are resolute in our determination to develop the country in the shortest possible time.

In accordance with Myanmar's foreign policy, Myanmar makes every effort to forge friendly relations with all countries. In conformity with this time-tested policy, we have successfully established friendly and close relations with all neighbouring countries. It is a policy that we pursue in our relations with fellow members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), countries of the region and all other countries of the world. I wish to take this opportunity to urge those countries that now have negative views on Myanmar to look at our situation in a more objective manner. We are building a democratic society, a society in which peace and stability prevails, a society where our people can enjoy a better life in larger freedom.

What we urgently need in the new century is the realization of a just and an equitable international order. We need an international order where right, and not might, prevails. In establishing such an international order, the United Nations is the only organization that can provide the necessary leadership. The envisaged international order must also respect the right of every nation to adopt the political, economic and social systems that best suit its domestic context. It must be an international order in which the legitimate desire of every nation for justice and equality is accepted by powerful States with understanding and sympathy. In this, the role of the United Nations, as the principal intergovernmental institution of universal nature, is irreplaceable. Hegemonic tendencies and power politics will certainly undermine the basis of international relations and will thereby jeopardize our system of collective security.

It is my fervent hope that every Member State will play its part and make this Organization equal to the challenges of the new century. At this Millennium Assembly let us all resolve to translate the ideals of the Organization into a concrete reality through cooperation, goodwill and firm commitments.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I call on His Excellency Mr. Juli Minoves-Triquell, Chairman of the delegation of Andorra.

Mr. Minoves-Triquell (Andorra): Andorra will become, through the Western European and Others Group (WEOG) rotation scheme, a member of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations at the beginning of 2001, for a period of three years. This is a great responsibility and a particular challenge for a small country that has only been a Member of the United Nations since 1993.

My Minister of External Relations, Mr. Albert Pintat, would have loved to have been here today to express to Members Andorra's commitment to the goals of the United Nations and specially our obligations in ECOSOC. He would have praised the Brahimi report and its new thoughts on peacekeeping operations, which my country supports. When he learned that he would be unable to lead this year's delegation to the United Nations, owing to unavoidable official functions in Europe, he asked me, in the light of our forthcoming membership in ECOSOC, to contribute to this general debate of the year 2000 with some free reflections — if possible innovative ones — on what globalization might mean for a small State. This is a daunting task since everything seems to have been said about the subject, but I shall try to dutifully carry out my Minister's instructions.

First, however, let me convey to President Harri Holkeri Albert Pintat's congratulations for his election as President of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, while thanking his predecessor, Theo-Ben Gurirab, for a difficult job well done.

When I was a student here in the United States many years ago, I took a course in photography. I had taken from my family's house in Andorra a negative — it was one of the older glass negatives — and there in the university photography lab I set it up for developing. I remember that moment when I peered into the developer tray and saw, slowly forming on the white photographic paper, an image, the image of my great grandmother. It was a shock, there in New Haven, to see this face from a long distant past, from long before I was born, come slowly into clarity. A lost image from a lost past.

If I had the time, and Members the inclination, I could tell them about my great-grandmother, a formidable woman who never left the Valley of Andorra, high up in the mountains of the Pyrenees. I could tell them what her face, strong and hard as the stone of the mountains, says about the history of my country. In the photograph, she is dressed all in black, and looks away from the camera, down at the rocky ground. Behind her, one can see the stones of the

family farm, high up in the mountains above Saint Julia, one of the seven parishes that make up the Principality of Andorra.

Her Andorra is very different from the country today. Dirt paths have become asphalt roads and stone-strewn fields are now covered with shops, houses and hotels. The remarkable Romanesque churches that are the pride of my country, churches that date back to the foundation of the Principality in the late thirteenth century and that loomed over the villages for almost a millennium, are now hemmed in by concrete buildings — stores, apartments, houses, the same buildings you might find in parts of Rio de Janeiro, Beijing or New York.

Yes, so much has changed since my grandfather's hand snapped this picture. My great-grandmother would recognize only the church towers and the stones of the mountains. And what was so specific about her world — the stories, the cooking, the fabric of daily life — well, that has disappeared.

In the space of 70 years, Andorra has changed from being a poor and remote place to a prosperous country, with over 10 million tourists a year, who come for skiing in the winter and hiking in the summer. We are now a commercial hub. If you look for a country transformed by globalization, you might look to Andorra.

Andorra is a country that has survived, independent and uninvaded, since 1278. It is one of the oldest and one of the smallest democracies in the world. A historian might argue that this remarkable fact is due to its isolation and poverty, or because for centuries the outside world was neatly balanced by its co-Princes — the Bishop of Urgell to the south, and to the north the Count of Foix, later the French King and since 1805 the head of the French State. Unsurprisingly, I might attribute the remarkable record of peace to the cautious character of the Andorran people. Or rather — and less partially — I think that because it is a small country, where parishes have been able to readily communicate with one another at the Casa de la Vall, the House of the Valleys, communication never broke down.

The Millennium Summit of the United Nations had as its theme globalization. As a summit, it was aptly named, since I would say that globalization is the story of the second millennium — indeed perhaps it is the story of human culture. I am a politician, not a historian, but we all know the effect on both Europe and the Middle East wrought by the Crusades of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, or the transformation of indigenous and European cultures brought about by the "discovery" of the New World, or the effect of the slave trade of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on both Africa and the Americas. These violent encounters formed the world even as they brought death and destruction. They also sparked our imaginations. The Globe was the name of Shakespeare's playhouse in sixteenth-century London, a joke he liked to work into many of his plays. I like to think of the United Nations as the new Globe, a theatre in which we are the players or — if we have the imagination — the dramatists for the story of our fragile planet.

But the globalization we are now facing is of a different nature. As Kofi Annan suggested in his opening introduction to the Millennium conference, the starting point for this millennium can be summed up in one word: "globalization" — the melting away of national boundaries as the world becomes one economy, one common space, one village.

It is an idyllic view, the view of the world as a village. Of course, the Secretary-General is all too aware of the negative effects of the process. In the same introduction, he cautions:

> "Globalization offers great opportunities, but at present its benefits are very unevenly distributed while its costs are borne by all.
>
> "Thus the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people." (*A/54/2000, paras. 13 and 14*)

We all know the protests that have taken place, and will take place, against this same word, "globalization". Let us listen, for instance, to one of the interested groups, chosen at random, the International Forum on Globalization (IFG), which understands the term as referring to a "globalized economic system dominated by supranational corporate trade and banking institutions that are not accountable to democratic processes or national Governments". The IFG accuses

> "the GATT, WTO, Maastricht, NAFTA, combined with structural adjustment policies of the IMF and the World Bank, to be direct stimulants to the

processes that weaken democracy, create a world order that is under the control of transnational corporations, and that devastate the natural world".

According to the IFG, globalization brings the diminishment of powers of local and indigenous communities, States and even nations, destroys both small-scale agriculture and the earth's remaining wilderness, and brings a worldwide homogenization of diverse local and indigenous cultures. To counter its effects, the IFG advocates the revitalization of local communities by promoting maximum self-reliance, the recognition of rights of indigenous peoples and the abandonment of the paradigm of unlimited economic growth.

When I listen to these words, I cannot help but hear a lament, a lament for a lost and simpler world: the world of my great-grandmother. And I am reminded of that greatest of all laments for lost culture, the work that indeed informs the thinking behind the activists who struggle against the forces of globalization — Claude Lévi-Strauss and his masterpiece, *Tristes Tropiques*, his elegy for the people of the Amazon basin, which even as he captured it on paper was disappearing into our modern world.

I understand the sadness for the lost world, the world of the past that is always slipping away from us, that exists in the black-and-white negative of our memory. And so here I elegize, before this Assembly, all that has disappeared, not simply in Andorra but in the world, all that has been forgotten, paved over by the forces of travel, of tourism, of telephone, television, cinema and the Internet.

These technologies link the world; they narrow its distances and threaten to dilute the cultures of the globe into a flat monoculture. And I ask my listeners now: what new discoveries await us? We cannot imagine them, but they will come, and sooner than we think, in this terrifying and beautiful globe of ours.

And yet, and yet ... The IFG manifesto was not posted on a church door in Wittenburg, printed in a new technology that sparked another revolution, the Reformation of the sixteenth century. No, it was downloaded from a web site on the Internet. This Web — in which ideas, images, voices travel across our globe in a flash — is a remarkable invention that collapses both time and space.

In the same way, I now realize that my image of my great-grandmother came from a negative, from a camera — a technology that perhaps more than any other, besides the computer, has transformed and quickened the pace of our world.

This is to make a very simple point: not simply that this manifesto is presented in the very technology of globalization, but that nostalgia for a local economy might be a product of globalization itself.

My great-grandmother had a good life, but a hard one, with terrible cold in the winter and constant work. Would she have chosen this life, if she could have had another? If she had known another? And more to the point, would she have been allowed to choose?

We need to remember that people themselves have embraced change. Real people who are not content to live — physically or imaginatively — in their places of birth, but, filled with a desire to better their lives or to see the world, they reach out and try to grasp change, if only to know what they have lost.

Lévi-Strauss could not bring himself to recognize that people he observed, deep in the Amazon rain forests, might want to leave their paradise — not because they were driven out by modernity, the modernity that Lévi-Strauss himself made so much of, but because they wanted to better their lives, to embrace the world, to feel for themselves the painful pulse of gain and loss.

We need only leave this Hall and walk through any street in the city to recognize this. People from all across the world, people of all races, walking up and down, alone or in conversation, happy or unhappy, homesick or embracing the dreams this city seems to proffer. In the streets, we see restaurants that offer wonderful meals from all around the world, and fusion restaurants: French-Senegalese, American-Thai. Or fusion children. In the streets of New York or Paris or Hong Kong or Andorra la Vella, the people are changing, colours are shifting. What brave new world is being born around us?

In saying this, I do not want to contradict the concerns of the anti-globalists, to in any way deny their recognition of the dangers of change. We ignore at our peril practical questions that turn around international finance, international corporations, the widening gulf between have and have-not countries, the dangers to the environment.

These are practical matters to be seen to. To paraphrase Annan, we need mechanisms to equalize the benefits of globalization, to make life a positive thing for all peoples. By this I do not mean the quest for superfluous material goods, but shelter and health and protection from disease. And I would add, simply, that before and during my tenure here as Ambassador, the United Nations hosted a series of summits or conferences designed to address these very problems — Rio, Istanbul, Copenhagen, Beijing, Rome, just to name a few. The world conference against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, the world summit for children and Rio + 10 are to come. There is a substantial body of work in place to address the stresses of globalization. What we need to do now is continue to work towards our goals.

In conclusion, I would like to consider a presupposition of both global optimists and pessimists: the notion that globalization has replaced nationalism. Again, to quote Kofi Annan, globalization means "the melting away of national boundaries as the world becomes one economy, one common space, one village".

Similarly, the report published in *The New York Times* concerning the protests against globalization stated that "speakers do not oppose globalization per se, because, in their view, the era of nation-States is coming to its inevitable end".

Are globalization and nationalism opposed? On the surface, they would appear to be. So much of globalization — economies that transcend borders, communication networks that shrink the world — seems to render an earlier model of the nation-State obsolete.

And yet, whether it be the ethnic conflicts in Rwanda or in the Balkans, issues of immigration in the developed world or conflict in East Timor, we know that the question of the border, of the passport, remains increasingly important. Despite our interconnectedness, nationalism has not withered away. I fear the rise of a nationalism no longer linked to true patriotism, that is to the love of a place. I pray that the world does not succumb to an unthinking nationalism that would exist simply to exclude or to feed the ambitions of unscrupulous politicians. We need a democratic nationalism forged out of a concern for the rights of individuals. That is not nationalism as it worked out from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries — a nationalism linked to the struggle to control markets, to the scramble for loot — but a new nationalism that is not predicated on identity, on cultural sameness, a nationalism that is linked to a world economy that is no longer restricted by national borders, a democratic or civic nationalism, a global nationalism.

This would be a new nationalism, I must add, in which Andorra and other small countries are not historical anachronisms, but are emblematic of this civic nationalism, predicated as it must be on the democratic will of the people. In this sense, Andorra's quiet patriotism, its 700 years of peace and communication, can modestly serve as a kind of historical model.

Countries need to rethink what it means to be a nation in order to participate effectively in the life of this our globe, in order to become what we must be and to a certain extent already are: united nations. In its very name, in its very mission, the United Nations anticipated the globalization that is so rapidly occurring. Born out of a global threat posed by war and later by nuclear war, forged from the most terrible of national struggles, the United Nations is an activist forum for issues that are global, not in the sense that they transcend any individual nation, but in the sense that they are of concern to all nations.

The International Criminal Court, whose statute will soon be ratified by Andorra, a country which had the honour of contributing to it by composing the first paragraphs of the preamble, is a good example of an entity that respects borders but that places human rights above all. Crimes against humanity must be punished, and shall be.

This new nationalism, while it recognizes borders, asserts that the rights of citizens to liberty and peace are primary. Hence, the United Nations, even as it respects national borders, needs to recognize that it can and should become proactive in the protection of those rights in the case of civil conflict. So too, the great global threat of AIDS and other infectious diseases demands a response from each nation and a recognition that these threats can never be adequately dealt with alone, but only by working globally through the United Nations. In short, we need not only the United Nations, but, as many have said, we need united nations.

I began this speech with the image of my great-grandmother looking down at the stony ground of her country. I would end it, symbolically at least, with another image: our image. Someday, our great-grandchildren may discover our image, perhaps even our image here in this place. Perhaps they will reproduce it through a technology so strange, so remarkable, we cannot even imagine it. But let us hope that they live in the brave new world I have spoken of today. And let us hope that they see us as an image of positive change. We who have lived through such change cannot turn away from it. With our feet on the ground of this great globe of ours, we need to look forward. We need to grasp change. We need to reach out.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Fritz Longchamp, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Haiti.

Mr. Longchamp (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): The Republic of Haiti wishes to add its voice to all those who have already congratulated Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. We take this opportunity also to pay tribute to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab for the success with which he guided the work of the fifty-fourth session.

I convey warm regards to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who has made a remarkable contribution to enhancing the confidence placed in the Organization.

The Republic of Haiti welcomes the admission of Tuvalu to membership of the United Nations.

There is no question but that this session should focus on how to implement the decisions taken by our heads of State or Government during the Millennium Summit with a view to forging a policy of effective global cooperation for the twenty-first century. Despite all the criticism one could legitimately level at the Organization after 55 years, the United Nations system remains the sole worldwide structure that can provide collective solutions to the problems facing us in the spheres of international security, the environment and economic and social development.

The Organization is often found lacking in terms of solutions to problems. But we know very well that this lack of effectiveness is the result of several factors, including a lack of resources and poor management of those that are available, and overlap in the functions of United Nations institutions and agencies. We think it is important to continue to rationalize the functioning of the Organization in order to secure the best results from existing resources. We must remember that entrusting the United Nations with a mandate without providing it with the proper means for fulfilling it has the inevitable and negative consequence of undermining the Organization's credibility.

Last June in Geneva, we took stock of the outcome of the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development. The assessment was very mixed, not to say negative. The fact is that the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action were formulated in response to a world socio-historical situation marked both by a widening gap between North and South and by a distinct incongruity between the positive economic aspects and the negative social aspects of globalization. Social development therefore gains in urgency as the process of globalization accelerates.

In spite of all the political and economic difficulties facing the Republic of Haiti, it has made constant efforts to attain the goals of the Copenhagen Summit, as witnessed by the seemingly minor but actually important fact that between 1997 and 2000 Haiti's ranking in the United Nations Development Programme human development index rose from 156 to 150. But we know that we are far from reaching acceptable levels of social development. That is why the Haitian Government continues to devote special attention to implementing the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s.

The Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries will be held at Brussels in May 2001. It will, inter alia, assess what has been done to strengthen the human and institutional capacities of the least developed countries. Unless these are strengthened, it will be extremely difficult for least developed countries fully to attain goals of the Copenhagen Programme of Action.

Beyond its social aspects, the question of development will be decisive for the peaceful future of international relations. Statistics remind us daily that the countries of the North and the countries of the South are moving further apart as the changes brought about by globalization continue swiftly. This situation is politically, economically and ecologically dangerous

for the stability of the international system; this could lead in the long term to the spread of areas bereft of law, to sudden migratory flows and to the continued use of armed conflicts and violence as a way of conducting relations between and within nations.

Haiti therefore welcomes the fact that a central theme of next year's second high-level dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership will be the identification of ways to integrate developing countries into the world economy in the twenty-first century.

The economy of the twenty-first century will increasingly be based on new information technologies and this will be an enormous challenge for the developing countries. Because of this, maximizing cultural resources and local genetic resources for development and for preserving traditional knowledge will become essential for sustainable development, since it offers an appropriate legal framework to enable countries of the South to preserve their intellectual property rights to their genetic resources.

Implementation of a global policy for economic development will have no really significant effect on real development of the human being if the question of peace is neglected. Peace and development are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's constitution states explicitly that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed". It is therefore essential that the concept and the practice of peace become a real culture so as to enable societies and individuals to develop and enrich themselves through their cultural diversity. We welcome the proclamation of 2001 as the "Year of Dialogue among Civilizations".

Social development and the worldwide dissemination of a culture of peace are definitely basic elements here. However, we think that it is important to welcome the idea of integrating them into a wider conceptual and operational dimension — the dimension of human security which places the human being at the very heart of international priorities. Far from harming the interests of the nation-State, human security fully meets its concerns. In fact, human security goes beyond, formally speaking, the natural sphere of action of nation-States to deal with transnational phenomena such as the degradation of the environment, natural disasters and international crime in all of its many aspects which pose serious threats to the control over, and managing of, national affairs. The great challenge today is to work out and implement a programme for human security that establishes, as a yardstick for its success, its ability to release men and women in our world from the slavery of poverty.

In our search for solutions to current problems, we need to envisage the reform of our Organization and, in particular, the reform of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

Questions of development are linked to questions of international security and therefore neither of these reforms should be neglected. After years of negotiation and debate, it is time now for the international community to reach a consensus on the democratization of the Security Council to make it better adapted to the new international realities. It would also be an ideal time to give thought to a thorough reassessment of the veto, which is no longer in keeping with the current state of international relations.

The attainment of these goals will make it possible for our Organization to discharge its twofold mission: guaranteeing peace among nations and assisting the peoples of the earth to develop their potential.

Likewise, the reform of the Economic and Social Council is essential if we want to give the United Nations the tools it needs to confront the challenges of the twenty-first century. This reform should seek to avoid or eliminate the functional overlapping of programmes of action of the agencies of the United Nations system, while developing a policy of partnership for development. Accordingly, it is essential to strengthen the functions of the Economic and Social Council that relate to the coordination of funds and programmes. The strengthening of the role of, and the functioning of, the Economic and Social Council is particularly crucial in this era of globalization. Only the definition and implementation at the multilateral level of coordinated plans of action will make it possible to help, in a meaningful way, the efforts of States to eradicate poverty and to establish a solid basis for comprehensive sustainable development.

Our Organization is rightly called a universal Organization. This is why the Republic of Haiti welcomed enthusiastically our unanimous decision to

admit Tuvalu as the 189th Member. It is only right that the 9,000 inhabitants of that country be properly represented in our world Organization.

Therefore the situation of the 23 million Chinese of Taiwan is a matter of concern to us. We welcome the fact that the dialogue-based approach continues to prevail on both sides of the Straits of Taiwan. While we wait for the dialogue to produce satisfactory results for both sides, we think that the question of the representation of these 23 million people deserves the attention of the United Nations.

Allow me to conclude by referring to a few figures. According to the latest report on development, produced by the World Bank, one fifth of the world's population, no less than 1.2 billion people, are living on less than one dollar a day. One out of five children die before reaching the age of five. The World Bank tells us also that the 20 richest countries have an average income which is 37 times higher than that of the 20 poorest countries and this gap is twice what it was 40 years ago.

And yet, these last 40 years were all decades devoted to development by the international community. There is, therefore, a problem here that I would call the paradox of the twentieth century. Never has humanity attained such a capacity to produce all kinds of goods and riches, and yet never have there been so many people unjustifiably going hungry.

The essential challenge today is for the twenty-first century not to resemble the twentieth in this respect. To make this happen, the mind-boggling constant increase in scientific knowledge must be properly harnessed to the fight against poverty in all of its various manifestations.

The United Nations cannot spend another 55 years talking about development: it is time now, it is high time to make development a reality. The entire credibility of the Organization hinges on this issue because, basically, development is another name for peace.

Despite the many obstacles we face, Haiti hopes that the community of States will manage to build in this century and in this millennium a world where basic needs will be met, where nature will be protected, where the scourge of drugs and organized crime will be controlled, with opportunities for all, with hopes for a more promising future, in particular for young people and for the disadvantaged.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Vinci Niel Clodumar, Chairman of the delegation of Nauru.

Mr. Clodumar (Nauru): Mr. President, allow me to join previous speakers in congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. Nauru, like your Government, has full confidence in your ability to conduct the affairs the Assembly effectively and efficiently. Through you, Sir, Nauru congratulates the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Foreign Minister of Namibia, for a job well done which climaxed with the successful and unprecedented Millennium Summit.

The Republic of Nauru has just passed its first anniversary as a Member of this esteemed Organization with a Permanent Mission in New York that is just nine months old. The admission of our brother island from the Pacific, Tuvalu, as the 189th Member of the Organization, is a most welcome development. On behalf of my Government, I extend to Tuvalu our warm welcome into the brotherhood of nations.

My delegation commends the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his team at the Secretariat for their well-crafted report entitled "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century". The report has captured, in one document, the agony and ecstasy of the United Nations as it journeyed through its triumphs and failures over the past 55 years of its existence.

The purpose of our presence in this parliament of the peoples of the United Nations is not to bask in the ecstasy of past achievements but to pledge anew our commitment and determination to face the problems that continue to confront humanity, and to support the launching of the United Nations on a new crusade to engage the tempestuous challenges encapsulated in chapter VII of the Secretary-General's report. In conjunction with this, the heads of State or Government of Member States have mandated the Assembly, by their solemn act of adopting the outcome document, to implement the call for action.

It is further encouraging to hear Foreign Ministers expound upon and reinforce the commitments that their respective heads of State or

Government made at the Millennium Summit. It is now for the doers to deliver the goods, so to speak. It is here that the greatest challenges lie. It is indisputable that the issues before us are not new but are unfinished business, and the most difficult on which to make progress. The problem is in the interaction between Member States for the purpose of delivering agreed instruments that will act as platforms by which Member States will be obligated to adopt and implement at the national level.

It is therefore my delegation's strong view that our first priority is to revitalize and further strengthen the foundation for collaboration and cooperation among Member States on the one hand, and between the United Nations and the appropriate intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations on the other. That is, not only must we resolve to provide the United Nations with the allocated resources and processes to perform its tasks effectively, but we must also repair the negative undercurrents and detrimental practices that inhibit the achievement of desired outcomes.

In this regard, Nauru considers the following actions to be necessary steps towards this goal.

First, we must revitalize the work and restore the authority of the General Assembly as the only universally representative body of the United Nations.

Second, there is a need to address the ongoing marginalization of the smaller and less affluent Member States.

Third, we must expedite the reform of the Security Council. Nauru believes that an expansion in Security Council membership is the politically correct action to take, and we urge participants and facilitators alike to expedite the work of the Working Group.

Fourth, the preference for unanimity as the means of deciding on issues under consideration is, in our view, a major factor behind the delay in reaching agreed solutions and has on more than one occasion resulted in the dilution of outcomes. Setting such a high standard, when the principal organs of the United Nations come to decisions on a two-thirds majority basis, is self-defeating. Nauru takes the view that a unanimous outcome should be a target only, and not a rule.

Fifth, financial resources need to be shored up. The timely and unconditional payment of assessed contributions will enable the United Nations to discharge its responsibilities in a timely manner. Voluntary contributions are also a very essential source of funds to support the work of the subsidiary bodies and agencies through trust funds established under the United Nations. Nauru commends those Member States that contribute to such trust funds over and above their assessed contributions, and we also recognize and praise the important contribution that private trust funds such as the Ted Turner Foundation make to the work of the United Nations and its main agencies.

Sixth, a number of covenants remain dormant due either to the lack of signatories to bring them into force or to the lack of ratification by States that have signed. We thus call for all States to make a commitment to bringing outstanding international agreements into force.

Seventh, the Secretary-General's reform initiatives of 1997 must be brought to bear in the shortest time possible so that the limited resources of the United Nations are put to work more on the programmes of action and less on running the administrative machineries. We urge that the Secretariat continue to review its operations on a timely basis as it strives to do more with less.

The President of the Republic of Nauru, in his intervention in the round-table discussion, expressed his disappointment that the core responsibilities of the United Nations regarding the rights of peoples to self-determination and freedom from alien domination did not rank as importantly as the other issues currently before us. The fact that there are still 17 countries listed in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, coupled with the non-settlement of long-standing disputes between States over their borders, and the continuing existence of stateless people, may be indicative of the priority that these issues receive within the United Nations.

For Nauru, the continued refusal of the United Nations to deal with the plight of the millions of Chinese on the island of Taiwan is tantamount to avoiding its core responsibilities. By no stretch of the imagination could we be convinced that the Republic of China on Taiwan is a province of China. Nauru has no doubt that the condition that unification should take place through "peaceful" means, adopted by the United States and its allies as part of their "one China" policy, has helped maintain relative calm in the region. It is

incumbent upon the United Nations, under the appropriate Articles of the Charter, and the international community to find a lasting solution to the problem. The United Nations cannot claim to be a truly universally representative world body as long as the people of Taiwan continue to be excluded from this Organization.

East Timor is a classic case of the United Nations not paying attention to the concerns of the Pacific region. Undoubtedly, had the United Nations, through the Security Council, acted at the time it was prompted to do so by the Governments of the region, the human carnage and immeasurable damage to property would have been far less, and perhaps even avoided altogether.

It is in this vein that Nauru is raising the matter of West Papua. Our head of State stated Nauru's position on the issue in his intervention at the Millennium Summit, and I will therefore not repeat it here. However, the Nauru Mission to the United Nations has been instructed to take the necessary steps towards putting together a resolution on West Papua's call for a new and democratically run referendum on the question of independence from Indonesia, in the spirit of the 1962 New York Agreement between the Netherlands and Indonesia. We ask for the Assembly's support of this just cause.

Flowing from these issues of security and peace is the issue of the safety and survival of humankind from weapons of mass destruction, illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the pandemic of the HIV/AIDS virus. Despite the establishment of several initiatives by the United Nations in its effort to make progress on and expedite the question of disarmament, it is sad to note that progress is at a snail's pace, due mainly to resistance by most nuclear-weapon States to disarm. In the Pacific region, which has been declared a nuclear-weapon-free zone by the Rarotonga Treaty, the transboundary shipment of nuclear fuel and other radioactive material in the waters of States parties to the Waigani Convention are banned. Our efforts through the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) process, as well as bilateral and multilateral initiatives to protect our ecosystem and seas against accidents from these shipments in the high seas of our region, have been met with strong opposition by shipping States that, unlike us, are not dependent on the sea and its ecosystem for their livelihoods.

In this regard, Nauru supports the call by the Secretary-General to convene a special session of the General Assembly to address the nuclear disarmament issue, as we are not satisfied with the pace of progress in the other forums.

At the other end of the scale, small arms and light weapons obtained through illicit trade account for much of the political, ethnic and criminal killings and human suffering that occur in the less affluent countries of the world. The tranquil South Pacific has not been spared from this deadly trade. The United Nations will be convening the first Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects next year, and it is our hope that Member States will not put national political interests ahead of the desires of the international community to eradicate this illegal and offensive activity.

International efforts to contain the HIV/AIDS epidemic from spreading have not been successful in the least developed and developing countries, particularly in Africa. The prohibitive cost of treatment and social attitudes are the major constraints that these countries face in combating the pandemic. We are satisfied with the efforts of the United Nations to combat the epidemic, efforts that are largely being carried out through the World Health Organization and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. However, it is obvious that the United Nations needs the help of affluent countries to provide medicine and medical experts in support of its efforts. In this regard, Nauru has joined in the sponsorship of a draft resolution calling on the General Assembly to take up the issue and deal with it under its authority.

Poverty continues to be the major concern for the developing world. The fact that the number of least developed countries is stagnant at 48, with the possibility of another 3 countries being added to the list, is testimony to the fact that current programmes are not working. The Secretary General's report entitled "We the peoples" lists some ambitious initiatives to accomplish freedom from want for humanity. We strongly endorse the call for setting time-bound goals in making resolute commitments to the world's poorest and most vulnerable. Next year's conference on least developed countries and financing for development will be our first test since the Millennium Summit of our sincerity to move from rhetoric to action on the important issue of poverty alleviation.

The Pacific is a region that demands special attention. Projections by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific estimate growth in the Pacific region to be only about 2 per cent during the next three years, as compared to around 6 per cent for the rest of Asia. My own country is expected to experience several more years of negative growth, as our single resource and industry — phosphate — comes to the end of its natural life.

Small island developing States, and the Pacific islands in particular, face special difficulties is making the transition to globalization. They will need time to adjust to changes in the external trade regime and to the consequent changes in their economies. Our particular vulnerabilities should be recognized as justifying special consideration to deal with such issues as the global process of trade liberalization. The removal of special protective regimes continues to occur.

The South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission has been developing an environmental vulnerability index with input from both the United Nations and the Commonwealth Secretariat. Nauru, along with the other small island developing States in the Pacific, is gratified at the support it has received from several developed countries to finance the project to fruition. We urge that this work be incorporated into the work of the United Nations, especially into the work of the Committee for Development Policy and that of the Bretton Woods institutions.

For all of us in the Pacific, the ocean is our major resource. It provides us with food, income from the sale of fish stocks caught in our respective zones and, through the natural cycle of evaporation and condensation, it is also a vital source of our fresh water. It may also prove to be the source of the demise of many low-lying Pacific islands from global warming and the resultant rise in sea levels. The Rio Conference in 1992 provided the foundations for international action. The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer is an important step forward.

But those responses may prove to be too few, too little and too late for many small islands. We urge the community of nations to implement the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. Nations and the private sector must incorporate "green accounting" into their practices in order to integrate the environment into economic policy. Suitable regulations and incentives need to be designed into the web of governance.

Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action continue to be the guiding principles for the sustainable development of our region and the protection of our environments. My delegation is pleased to note that the World Bank has adopted much of the relevant language in its programmes but it, and the rest of the developed countries, need to commit to maintain and, where possible, to expand overall levels of support for small States' development, in terms of both advocacy and the provision of technical assistance.

Fishing offers the best hope for the future sustenance of the smaller island countries that have no mineral resources and/or tourism to contribute to the national treasury. Nauru therefore reaffirms the importance of the sustainable integrated management and conservation of living marine resources in the world's oceans, and the obligations of States to cooperate to that end. We again call for an end to unsustainable and damaging practices, such as drift-net fishing, offshore dumping and high-seas pollution. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is a threat to the economic development of coastal States in the Pacific, Caribbean and Latin American regions, whose national incomes are heavily dependent on the export of fish. The efforts by the United Nations to convene the first open-ended informal consultative process on the oceans and the Law of the Sea has enabled States to address those issues with a view to reporting the deliberations of the consultation to the General Assembly for its consideration and further action.

Another area where small States, including our own, have been successful in generating income for the national treasury is in the provision of onshore and offshore financial services. However, pressure has been applied by the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to blacklist countries that do not meet the anti-money-laundering standards of those international bodies. We understand and accept the need to have an anti-money-laundering regime, and many small island States have gone a long way to implement those requirements.

For its part, the Government of Nauru recently issued a letter of commitment to the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention to

undertake the United Nations minimum performance standards on anti-money-laundering initiatives. Regrettably, the compliance level has been raised unilaterally by the OECD to include harmful tax competition — which has nothing to do with money-laundering and other financial crimes. This is wrong in international law and violates both the letter and spirit of many United Nations resolutions regarding the intervention of international organizations in the domestic jurisdiction of States. Such unilateral action is not acceptable to Nauru.

For the Pacific region, the question of the equitable representation of the 11 Pacific island countries in the bodies and commissions of the United Nations is of vital importance. Until 20 years ago, it may have been reasonable to have Australia and New Zealand in the Group of Western European and other States and a handful of Pacific islands in the Asian Group. However, with the increase in membership since that time, and the addition of a number of Pacific island nations in recent times, it is incumbent upon the United Nations to review the groupings.

Oceania is a distinct and internationally recognized region of the world. The Asian Group presently constitutes member countries from the Middle East, Central Asia, China, Japan, the two Koreas, the member countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Pacific island countries. The 11 Pacific island countries are drowning in the Asian Group, while Australia and New Zealand, the godfathers of the Pacific island countries, are marooned in the Group of Western European and other States.

The parliaments of the ASEAN member countries, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the Pacific island countries are members of a regional body called the Asian-Pacific Parliamentarians Union. It is a well-recognized body in the various regional and international parliamentary forums. This model could be used as the basis for a new regional group within the United Nations, with the inclusion of Australia and New Zealand. In our view, this new grouping would provide the best opportunity for those Member States to be equitably represented in the work of the United Nations.

In conclusion, Nauru would like to reiterate the importance of Member States making concerted efforts to strengthen the fundamentals of multilateralism. At the same time, the United Nations must assert its leadership role through the coordination of all key players in keeping the peace and fighting poverty and transboundary crimes, as well as with regard to humanitarian initiatives, the protection of human rights and the rights of the child, and in the fight against inequity and inequality. Only through such collaborative efforts can we move the United Nations in the direction that our leaders have agreed it must go.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alfred Carlot, Chairman of the delegation of Vanuatu.

Mr. Carlot (Vanuatu): Allow me first of all to convey the apologies of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vanuatu, The Honourable Serge Vohor, who is unable to be here on this historic occasion due to most pressing commitments at home. I am therefore very deeply honoured to address the Assembly on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Vanuatu.

At the outset I wish to congratulate Mr. Harri Holkeri on his election to this historic session of the General Assembly. My delegation is confident that with his vast experience and diplomatic skills, he will guide this Assembly to a successful conclusion. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to his predecessor, who so ably guided the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Allow me also to congratulate Tuvalu as the newest Member of our family of nations. As a small island State, and, more significantly, a member of the South Pacific region, Vanuatu is very pleased to welcome Tuvalu. Vanuatu certainly hopes a further increase in the Pacific island membership would be a positive step in the region's economic and political development as we embark on the twenty-first century.

Small island States, including Vanuatu, are continuously confronted by difficult and challenging issues, which must be addressed at this summit. For the Pacific region, its key features are its immense geographic spread, its small land and population base and limited natural resources, and its vulnerability to economic and natural shocks, which inevitably have an impact on its physical infrastructure and economic development. Dependence has been on a few fragile commodity markets and fickle tourist income.

One of our greatest challenges is education for all. The Human Poverty Index of the Pacific Island

Countries shows Vanuatu as the third last of the least developed countries. Vanuatu shares the view that the key to development and success is education. As a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Vanuatu is committed to this cause. However, limited financial and human resources continue to hinder development in this area.

Vanuatu welcomes the initiative taken by the Secretary-General, in his address to the Dakar World Education Forum, held in April 2000, to build a global partnership for girls' education. Vanuatu will be pleased to be part of this global initiative. At the same time, Vanuatu fully supports the view that involving women as central players in development provides benefits in the areas of nutrition, health, and savings and reinvestment at the family, community, and, ultimately, national level. Nevertheless, the challenge of ensuring education for all at all levels is an ambitious objective that will require external assistance. The education and training of the population, including women, must therefore be an important goal of the Assembly.

One of the great obstacles to our economic development, including our foreign investment portfolio, has always been the relatively high cost of public utilities, in particular the energy sector, which is largely dependent on traditional oil-based systems. The cost of importing oil products and petroleum-derived gas is currently about 90 per cent of our combined domestic exports. Our economy cannot afford this trend in the long run.

We believe that with access to the new and relevant technology available in the developed countries today, the Republic of Vanuatu and other small island nations can develop integrated renewable energy systems and hydrogen fuels if our potential wind- and sun-related and geothermal and hydroelectricity resources can be fully utilized.

Access to financial and technical resources from the developed countries can assist countries like the Republic of Vanuatu in moving in the right direction and thereby positively contribute to our common objective of creating a healthier and more environment-friendly economic development.

The emergence of new information technology today underlines the strong linkage between the concepts of knowledge and power. While communications and business transactions through the Internet and other modern electronic means have now become routine within the circles of the rich and the powerful, the large majority of the world's population, which lives in the poor developing countries, has very little or no knowledge about — let alone any access to — this new and revolutionary way of doing day-to-day business.

In this new millennium, the new information technology must be made accessible and affordable to the people living in the most remote areas of the developing nations in order to facilitate their access to better education, better health services and give them greater access to world markets and business opportunities. This is a great challenge, but one that we must face together, and proudly. That is why we have the United Nations.

Last month the national Parliament of Vanuatu passed two laws in this area — the Electronic Transactions Act and the E-Business Act. We hope that, through the support of relevant United Nations agencies and bilateral development partners, we will be able to fully implement these new laws for the benefit of our small island nation and its people, in particular in the rural and remote areas.

In his statement to the Millennium Summit, my Prime Minister highlighted the need for the industrialized countries immediately to ratify international treaties on the protection and sustainable management of our natural environment and resources, which are vital to the very survival of millions of citizens of small island States. Environmental degradation poses a serious threat to the small island States, which are threatened by the rising sea level. We continue to urge countries to adopt and ratify the Kyoto Protocol as soon as possible. As a signatory to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, Vanuatu is in the process of adding its signature to the Protocol.

We cannot let this opportunity pass without expressing our serious concern about the great difficulties a least developed country such as the Republic of Vanuatu is facing with regard to its application to join the World Trade Organization (WTO), because some powerful countries, in particular the United States of America, refuse to recognize our constant call for special consideration. Vanuatu has been in the complex process of accession for five and a half years. The negotiations we were engaged in until

last October with a number of major bilateral and multilateral players, such as the European Union, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Switzerland, have been completed in a spirit of understanding and appreciation of Vanuatu's circumstances.

The United States continues to place heavy and unreasonable demands on us, which we cannot accept. We consider those demands absurd, because the United States is among our least significant trading partners. We believe that Vanuatu has become the innocent victim of global trade disputes between the big players.

While we have always supported the principle of free international trade, we expect the new regime to be more realistic and more flexible, to allow ample time for the small and least developed countries to adjust to the new rules. After all, the WTO cannot be considered as a truly global trade regime without the adhesion of all independent countries, including small island States.

It is no secret, as the Vanuatu Prime Minister clearly stated at the recent G-77 Summit in Havana, that the conditions being imposed on us for joining the WTO are simply beyond our capacity to consider in the short to medium term. Unless the powerful countries review their positions and conditions with regard to our application, then the Republic of Vanuatu will have no other choice but to reconsider its original application to join the WTO.

On a related issue, we would also like to take this opportunity to register our most sincere recognition to all the Governments in the Pacific and other regions for their consistent support for Vanuatu's status as a least developed country. We continue to maintain our strong belief that the United Nations criteria for assessing least developed country status must be fully reviewed and must take into account new indices, such as the Environmental Vulnerability Index, and the long-term impacts of such natural disasters as cyclones, tsunamis and others on countries' social and economic advancement.

Enhancing the role of the peacekeeping forces of the United Nations must also be a priority for this Assembly. It is in this spirit that Vanuatu commends the Brahimi report on peacekeeping, believing that, once implemented, it will allow the United Nations to carry out its peacekeeping operations effectively. At this juncture, I am proud to say that, in spite of our meagre resources, Vanuatu is participating, for the first time in its 20-year history as an independent nation, in United Nations peacekeeping missions in East Timor and Bosnia. Prior to this attainment, Vanuatu also served in some regional peace-monitoring missions.

In his statement to the Millennium Summit, the Prime Minister of Vanuatu touched on an important issue: the principle of self-determination and the related question of West Papua. The case of West Papua has always been high on Vanuatu's agenda. In 1984, the late Prime Minister and father of our independence, Walter Hadye Lini, said:

> "We may not have the resources to support their struggle, but we can remember them in our everyday prayers. For when we talk about their struggle, we must always use the name that was very dear to them: West Papua."

The United Nations must be consistent in its decisions concerning the recognition and respect of the fundamental right to self-determination of the people of West Papua. The truth surrounding the so-called act of free choice must be exposed to the Melanesian sisters and brothers of West Papua and to the rest of the international community. Saddest of all was General Assembly resolution 2504 (XXIV) of 1969 on West Papua. How can the United Nations continue to ignore the cries of over 3 million people demanding justice?

This year marks the end of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. It is only appropriate that the United Nations should reconsider and revisit the decisions taken at that time. Following the tragedy in East Timor, Vanuatu believes that it is not too late for the international community to act to halt a similar tragedy in West Papua. In this context, Vanuatu would like to strongly request that the issue of West Papua be placed for discussion on the agenda of the Committee of 24. Any move to oppose this will most certainly undermine the credibility of the United Nations and its decisions on this special case. Over the past few decades, the United Nations has positively contributed to the process of decolonization. We must not allow this opportunity to pass.

On the question of reform, we agree that any reforms should include the Security Council in order to make it more democratic and transparent. The membership of the Security Council should be enlarged not only to enhance geographic representation, but also in response to the aspirations felt at all levels of the

world community and to the voice of the least developed countries and small island States.

Vanuatu would like to congratulate all those countries that recognize the need for a proper evaluation and assessment of the crisis situations in Fiji and the Solomon Islands prior to taking punitive measures, if any. We in the Republic of Vanuatu believe that traditional economic and other forms of sanctions against individual countries in times of crisis should be fully reviewed in this new millennium. In this respect, the delegation of Vanuatu would like to express its sincere appreciation to Sir John Kaputin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Papua New Guinea, who so ably led the Pacific ministerial mission of the African-Caribbean-Pacific Group of States to Fiji and the Solomon Islands in order to carefully assess the situation in the two countries. The mission was also comprised of the Foreign Minister of the Cook Islands, Mr. Robert Woonton; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Vanuatu; and the Minister of Education of Samoa, Ms. Fiame Naomi Mata'afa.

I would also like to take this opportunity to commend Mr. Laisenia Qarase, Prime Minister and Minister for National Reconciliation and Unity in the Interim Administration of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, for his eloquent statement on the situation in Fiji. We would also like to extend our appreciation to Mr. Danny Philip, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Solomon Islands, for his comprehensive statement.

We have made visionary statements. Now is the time for us to translate these into action. We have called for a more efficient, responsive and effective United Nations. We must muster the good will to resolutely implement the Millennium Declaration and to rededicate ourselves to upholding the fundamental principles of the United Nations. Let us not lose sight of these goals.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Momodou Lamin Sedat Jobe, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Gambia.

Mr. Jobe (Gambia): Allow me first of all to congratulate Mr. Holkeri on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session and to commend him for the able leadership he has shown since the beginning of our session. With his wisdom and vast experience, there is no doubt that he will guide our deliberations to a successful conclusion.

In the same vein, I would also like to commend Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, the outgoing President, for the professional and efficient manner in which he conducted the affairs of this Assembly.

Last but by no means least, I pay tribute to the Secretary-General for the dynamic and visionary manner in which he has been carrying out his mandate. I would also like to seize this opportunity to congratulate him for his forward-looking millennium report, entitled, "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century".

May I also join previous speakers in congratulating Tuvalu on its admission as the newest Member of the United Nations.

The Millennium Summit that has just ended was a historic event that brought together world leaders of the highest political echelon who rededicated themselves to the principles of the United Nations. As the Summit's political declaration and outcome document indicate, our leaders considered the various challenges faced by the United Nations, exchanged views and explored ideas on the role that the Organization is expected to play in the twenty-first century. I am confident that, through concerted efforts, we, the servants of the people, will energize our United Nations to enable it to tackle the challenges of this century.

Some of the important issues that were raised during the recently concluded Summit, such as conflict resolution, poverty eradication, accessibility to health care and debt relief, to mention only a few, have been echoed by many speakers since the general debate began. An issue that is of particular concern to the President of the Republic of the Gambia and to my delegation is that of conflict situations, particularly those in Africa. I am referring to situations such as those that currently prevail in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Sierra Leone, the Comoros, Somalia, Guinea and Liberia.

In Angola, we are concerned about the continuing civil strife and its negative impact on the well-being of the brotherly people of that country. It is an open secret that the intransigence of UNITA is largely responsible for the present state of affairs. We therefore commend the Security Council sanctions Committee on Angola, especially the work done by Ambassador Fowler and his Panel of Experts, to show the way forward on how to reduce UNITA's capacity to wage war. We hope that

the recommendations contained in the Panel's report will be fully and scrupulously implemented, and that this will force UNITA to return to the negotiating table.

We are equally alarmed at the volatile situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its repercussions throughout the Great Lakes region. My delegation therefore strongly urges the belligerents, signatories of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, to adhere to the Agreement's terms and conditions, with a view to accelerating the peace process.

Regarding Ethiopia and Eritrea, we are heartened by the current adherence to the June 2000 ceasefire and strongly urge the two brotherly countries to accelerate negotiations on a comprehensive peace agreement that would hopefully lead to a definitive conclusion of the regrettable two-year-long border conflict. In this connection, my delegation strongly supports the speedy deployment of a peacekeeping mission to the disputed area.

Somalia also continues to attract our attention. We therefore commend President Ismail Omar Guelleh for his relentless endeavour to broker the Djibouti process that culminated in the recent election of President Abdikassim Salad Hassan. We wish President Salad Hassan all the best in his onerous task of forming a representative Government, a Government of national unity, and in the uphill task of rebuilding his war-torn country. We also appeal to all the Somali factions to put their differences aside, to put their country first and to join in the concerted effort to achieve the national unity that has eluded Somalia since 1991. We all welcome Somalia into the international community once more, as it has now started occupying its seats in international meetings.

Nearer to home, the volatile situations in the brotherly countries of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia continue to be of great concern to us. My delegation, however, takes heart in the Security Council's decision, by its resolution 1317 (2000), to extend the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone. This, together with the efforts being deployed by the Economic Community of West African States, will definitely bring about positive results very soon.

At this point, we also want to commend the Government of the United Kingdom for stepping in with military assistance to bolster the United Nations troops there, showing courage and leadership when it was most needed. Other members of the Security Council should emulate that example and show leadership by example.

My delegation welcomes the establishment of the special court for Sierra Leone to try war crimes and other atrocities. Our only disappointment is that, unlike the case of other tribunals, funding is based on voluntary contributions. How, then, do we expect the Sierra Leone special court to function effectively and efficiently? Are we serious about the need to eradicate the culture of impunity? We also appreciate the work being done by the Security Council to ban the trade in conflict diamonds.

At the national, regional and subregional levels, the Secretary-General's 1998 report (A/52/871) on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa remains a useful guide in our collective efforts to resolve conflicts around the continent and at the same time address the problem of development.

In addition to that, the Brahimi report on United Nations peace and security activities is indeed very timely, but we will be doing justice to the report only if we implement the recommendations contained in it and do so as soon as possible.

Apart from the conflicts in Africa, we are also closely monitoring conflict situations in other parts of the world, such as the Middle East, the Korean peninsula and the Taiwan Strait. In the Middle East, my delegation strongly supports the peace process and the indefatigable efforts of President Bill Clinton to help the parties concerned to reach an agreement satisfactory to all sides. We must always bear in mind, however, that the relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), remain the most credible basis for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

If we unanimously agree that might is not right in one part of the world, we should apply the same principle in any other part of the world. I will refer to a number of situations.

In regard to the situation between Kuwait and Iraq, we in the Gambia have always maintained that the international community should, as a matter of urgency, find ways of alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people. But, at the same time, the Iraqi leadership must be accountable for the Kuwaiti prisoners of war and missing persons. The families of the prisoners of

war and missing persons have also been suffering for too long. Furthermore, we cannot treat lightly the issue of the Kuwaiti national archives, still in Iraqi hands. They must be returned, as must all other property removed illegally from Kuwait at the time of the invasion. Let us be fair to the people of Kuwait. They look to the international community for the justice that they so rightly deserve.

Let justice prevail everywhere. The sanctions imposed on Libya have been suspended, but what is stopping the Security Council from lifting them altogether? Libya has complied with all the conditions laid down by the Security Council. We therefore call on the Council to keep its part of the bargain. Still on the subject of Libya, the Government of the Gambia would like to congratulate President Muammar Al-Qadhafi for the preponderant role that he played to defuse the hostage crisis in the Philippines, in the spirit of goodwill and respect for human rights.

We also hope that the differences between the United States of America and the Republic of the Sudan over the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant will soon have a peaceful solution in the interests of all.

We also believe that the people of the Comoros should be listening, too, so that, through the efforts they are making to resolve locally the division existing in their country they will reach a definitive solution, in the interests of the continent of Africa as well as of the international community as a whole, that will make us all proud.

Let me come back to the issue of sanctions, but this time I want to talk about Cuba. The unjust sanctions imposed on Cuba for over 30 years should be lifted, as called for by many people of good will around the world, including some lawmakers here in the United States who believe that such sanctions are of another age and are not conducive to good-neighbourliness and international cooperation. It is our fervent hope that common sense will soon prevail so that at long last we will see the normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba, two neighbours, two great countries that have a lot to offer to their peoples and to the rest of the world.

It is in this spirit that my delegation hails the thaw in relations between North and South Korea signalled by the June 2000 Summit in Pyongyang between Presidents Kim Jong Il and Kim Dae-jung. We encourage the two brotherly countries to continue on the path of reconciliation, which we hope will lead to the eventual reunification of the two Koreas.

Meanwhile, we are here yet again to reason with the Assembly about the pressing need to reconsider its position with regard to the case of the Republic of China on Taiwan. At this moment, when we the United Nations are at a crossroads, when history is in the making, when we are talking about inclusiveness, universality, globalization, democratization — and the list goes on — it defies logic that a country of 23 million people, with all that they have to offer to the rest of mankind, is continuously barred from participating in the work and activities of the United Nations. The Republic of China has a national flag, national ceremonies and systems that are recognized all over the world. It is also one of the most advanced in the field of technology and electronics, agriculture and medicine.

Here is a country relatively small in size, but in terms of social, economic, financial, cultural, technological and scientific achievements, the Republic of China on Taiwan is indeed a force to be reckoned with, a formidable powerhouse. This country has always espoused everything that our Organization stands for, its purposes and principles, its aims and objectives, its shared values and dreams. The Republic of China is not discouraged. We must in the spirit of democracy and justice allow it to hoist its flag as an independent nation in this edifice of the United Nations.

It is my delegation's firm belief that this historic occasion of the Millennium Summit is the time to embrace opportunities, make progress on issues that divide us, move forward and look to the future with confidence, rather than living in the past, burying our heads in the sand or turning the other way. If we look closely at the documents prepared for the Millennium Summit — whether the one introduced by the Secretary-General or the working draft prepared by the General Assembly President — it will be seen that on almost all the issues raised in these important documents the Republic of China has much to offer.

Let us take human rights, democracy and good governance. It will be recalled that on 18 March this year, the Republic of China held its second presidential election. Nearly 12.8 million people, approximately 83 per cent of all eligible voters in Taiwan, participated in the election, vigorously contested by candidates from

all political parties. The opposition won the election, which resulted in an unprecedented transition of power from one political party to another, in an orderly and peaceful process. After that result the country still seeks to be a part of this house.

In the area of development and poverty eradication, we have witnessed on a number of occasions how the Republic of China has, through its International Economic Cooperation and Development Fund, been collaborating with such agencies as the Asian Development Bank, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to support development projects around the world.

As for the crucial sector of information and communications technology and the revolution in this field, it is an open secret that the Republic of China is in the vanguard. We will be talking a great deal about the growing digital divide. We have to bridge this divide, and it goes without saying that one of the major pillars of this bridge is the Republic of China.

How, then, can this country be excluded from the United Nations family? Furthermore, in this era of globalization and liberalization, it is impossible to understand how a leading trading nation like the Republic of China could be excluded from playing its rightful role in the comity of nations. The Republic of China is one of the most successful examples of economic development in the twentieth century and is now the world's nineteenth largest economy in terms of gross domestic product and the fourteenth most important trading nation. And, yes, it possesses the third largest amount of foreign reserves in the world.

What is even more praiseworthy is that the Republic of China has over the years sent more than 10,000 experts to train technicians in countries all over the world, especially in developing countries. In addition, it has also been providing disaster relief around the world amounting to billions of dollars. This country continues to respond promptly and positively to United Nations appeals for emergency relief and rehabilitation for countries suffering from natural disasters and wars.

It will also be useful and helpful to talk about cross-strait relations just to show that the door to dialogue is not completely shut between the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China. In fact since 1987 more than 12 million visits have been arranged and 100 million letters and phone calls exchanged. Last year alone some 2 million visits were exchanged. We note with a sense of great satisfaction that cross-strait trade totalled $27 billion. These figures speak volumes. This is why we believe that we should not only take note of, but also support, the conciliatory gestures of the Republic of China towards the People's Republic of China, especially the request for a summit to pursue cross-strait reconciliation efforts without specifying any preconditions, format or location. The newly elected President of the Republic of China even went further, by expressing the hope that the leaders of the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China would respect the free choice of the people on both sides and work together to resolve the question of a future one China.

While working to achieve that goal, we, the United Nations, should help the process by considering how both sides of the Taiwan Strait can participate at the same time in the United Nations. We are confident that, as was the case with the former East Germany and the former West Germany, parallel representation of divided nations in the United Nations — in addition to contributing to regional peace and security — can lead to their peaceful unification.

Other than conflict situations in the world, poverty eradication is a matter that is close to our heart. Indeed, as we begin the twenty-first century, poverty remains our number one challenge to sustainable human development. In this connection, I would like to mention that about three weeks ago the Gambia launched the 1998 National Household Poverty Survey and the 1999-2000 Participatory Assessment National Summary reports. The poverty survey revealed that households engaged in farming and the informal sectors record the highest poverty incidence, at 80 per cent and 85 per cent respectively. Some of the causes identified were low crop yields, inaccessibility to credit, low rainfall, poor soil fertility, unemployment, insufficient food, lack of income for basic needs, poor health and lack of education. We intend to address these causes within the framework of The Gambia's Vision 2020, our national blueprint for socio-economic development. The President of the Republic of The Gambia has thus reinforced the use of tractors and mechanized ploughing and modern agriculture techniques in order to increase the production of rice, groundnuts and other agricultural commodities, in an effort to achieve self-sufficiency.

Efforts to eradicate poverty should also include a health component. Indeed, as the World Bank rightly puts it, a major acceleration of growth is unlikely without a dramatic improvement in human capital, particularly public health. This is why my delegation finds the concept of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization very attractive indeed, especially in its strategic objectives. Let me at this juncture commend the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for its generous contribution towards the delivery of vaccines in the poorest countries and for supporting research with a view to developing vaccines.

Referring specifically to research in the area of malaria, I am proud to state that the Medical Research Council in the Gambia has always enjoyed the support and encouragement of my Government. The Medical Research Council has over the years accumulated a lot of experience and expertise. I am sure that the Global Alliance can make use of such experience and expertise in carrying out its own mandate.

For us in West Africa, the eradication of malaria is among our highest priorities. We, particularly the Gambia, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau and the Republic of Guinea, have been meeting at the subregional level to give effect to the World Health Organization's Roll Back Malaria strategy and to develop other preventive and curative remedies for implementation at the national level.

The recent breakthrough in human science through the successful decoding of the human genome, and the bright prospects for genome science, will allow for the development of vaccines and medicines as remedies for deadly diseases all over the world. What is even more amazing about that major scientific breakthrough is its reaffirmation of our common humanity. The language of the book of life is in fact the same for all peoples, irrespective of race, religion or region.

In efforts to make the world a better place for humankind, we also need to adopt a fresher approach regarding economic development issues, such as the debt burden and trade access, official development assistance and financing for development, to mention only a few. As one of the least developed countries, the Gambia looks forward to the forthcoming Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to be held in March 2001. My delegation fully supports the Secretary-General's proposal to urge industrialized countries to consider granting duty-free and quota-free access for essentially all exports from least developed countries.

I must add that in addressing the specific problems of least developed countries, extra efforts should be made to tackle the excruciating debt burden across the board, rather than limiting the approach to a select number of countries as provided for under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative. We note, sadly, that the international community's effort to resolve Africa's external debt problems continues to fall short of the desired results. The adoption of the HIPC initiative by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, while complementing global efforts, also falls short of the expected target: complete cancellation of the debt stock of all developing countries is what should happen. Unless that is done, the debt burden will continue to have a negative impact on the availability of adequate resources to finance Africa's economic recovery and social development.

The task of peace-building and peacemaking at the national and international levels and the other tasks within the United Nations mandate are facilitated because we are fortunate to have an organization such as the United Nations to provide the framework for such efforts. As the Secretary-General aptly puts it in his "We the peoples" report, the United Nations is

> "the only body of its kind with universal membership and comprehensive scope, and encompassing so many areas of human endeavour. These features make it a uniquely useful forum — for sharing information, conducting negotiations, elaborating norms and voicing expectations, coordinating the behaviour of States and other actors, and pursuing common plans of action." (*A/54/2000, para. 8*)

Regrettably, the Organization has not always been in a position to carry out its peacekeeping and other important roles effectively. This is due mainly to a dearth of financial resources. Therefore, if it is to assume the important role the founding fathers assigned it in the first place, that of meeting the needs of the world's peoples, we the Member States have to provide it with the necessary financial and other resources. The United Nations is expected to play an even greater role in the twenty-first century.

Quite apart from providing the Organization with the necessary resources, there will be a need to carry out some reforms, especially of the Security Council. We must begin by making its membership more reflective of present-day realities. Any reform of the Security Council must first and foremost address the serious anomaly which excludes Africa from the present permanent membership category. This must be corrected. Africa must be given a minimum of two permanent seats if and when the Council is ever reformed. In an organization like ours, the right of veto is a rebellion against democracy. For the five permanent members of the Security Council to understand the present situation as being unfair will be a mark of their sense of equity and justice. We will then know that they too want a Council based on mutual respect and fraternal cooperation in the service of humanity at large.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize once again that the United Nations is the best legacy that the founding fathers could have left for the peoples of the world. It has served us reasonably well for the past 55 years, nations big and small, rich and poor. It can serve us even better in the twenty-first century provided that we have the political will to strengthen the Organization so that it can carry on with the difficult but not impossible task of making this world a better place for all nations. That is the hope of my country. We are certain that all together we will be able to achieve it.

We should remain optimistic, because we know that, as Professor Pierre-Henri Simon was wont to say in his lectures at the Sorbonne, life begins on the other side of despair. The United Nations was created in the midst of despair as a haven of hope, peace, progress and justice for all. It should also be, for all of us, in justice and in truth, an asylum from the cruelty and pain of the outside world.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): One representative has asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to 5 minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I call on the representative of Guinea.

Mr. Sow (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): My delegation listened with surprise to the tendentious, groundless statements made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia concerning, in particular, the development of the relationship between Guinea and the fraternal neighbouring country of Liberia. The Government of Guinea, through me, would remind members of all the sacrifices we have made to bring an end to genocide and civil war in Liberia, consistent with our policy of peace, good-neighbourliness and support for the process of reconciliation in the West African subregion.

The Government of Guinea has generously welcomed to its territory more than 500,000 Liberian refugees over the past 10 years, and it is continuing to welcome them. These refugees, it should be stressed, are integrated into the Guinean family, and they have never complained about the welcome given to them in Guinea. Throughout this long period, the international community has expressed its satisfaction with the exemplary welcome given to refugees in Guinea. As a signatory of the Geneva Conventions and those of the Organization of African Unity relating to refugees, Guinea thus reaffirms its respect for its international commitments and its adherence to the principle of human rights and the rights of peoples.

On the other hand, the Security Council rightly placed an embargo on arms coming from Liberia. The bellicose attitude of the authorities in Monrovia and their involvement in trafficking in diamonds and light weapons is well known. The war in Sierra Leone has not yet been resolved because the genocidal rebels in Sierra Leone are supported by Monrovia and used to destabilize the subregion, in Sierra Leone and Guinea, as well as in other regions.

Denial cannot free the Liberian authorities from their responsibilities. I should like to stress that the most recent attack against the town of Macenta in Guinea three days ago, during which a staff member of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was savagely killed, was orchestrated by Monrovia. During this barbaric attack, the Guinean armed forces captured some of the assailants, including rebel elements who had infiltrated the ranks of the refugees, and they had definitely come from Liberia, the border is only a few kilometres from Macenta. Irrefutable proof will be made available to the international community to implicate the Government of Liberia in its role of destabilizing West Africa.

In this context, my delegation rejects as null and void the erroneous and deliberately confusing version of events provided by the Liberian Minister with regard to an alleged speech made by the President of the Republic of Guinea. I would like to stress that the President of the Republic of Guinea, General Lansana Conte, is a man of peace and conviction and that the Government of Guinea merely took protective steps to neutralize the rebellion, working, with the help of UNHCR, to distinguish between true refugees and rebel infiltrators.

The rebel attack on Macenta, which targeted young people, women, children and other defenceless sectors of civil society, as well as UNHCR officials, highlighted the relevance of the steps being taken by the Government of Guinea, as well as the need for the international community properly to take stock of the seriousness of the events taking place in Guinea and, therefore, to condemn the Liberian Government for its responsibility in this respect.

My Government informed the Security Council of these facts and, yesterday, the President of the Council condemned the rebel attack against Guinea and called for respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Guinea. The delegation of Guinea, which is anxious to work to keep the Assembly fully informed about the truth and to identify the authors and perpetrators of this act of aggression against its country, once again appeals to the General Assembly and the Security Council to dispatch, as soon as possible, a fact-finding mission to the Republic of Guinea. We remain convinced that, after such a mission has been sent, the responsibility of the Government of Liberia for disrupting the process of peace and reconciliation in the subregion will be exposed to public opinion in Africa and the international community as a whole.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.